

The Internal Dynamics of a Non-State Conflict Actor:

**The Organisational Resources and Internal Legitimacy of the  
FARC-EP in Colombia**

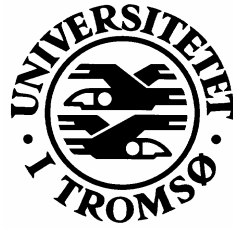
by

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**Master's Program in Peace and Conflict Transformation**



**Centre for Peace Studies  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
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## ABSTRACT

*Being the largest guerrilla group in Colombia and entitled the richest guerrilla group of the world, the FARC-EP constitutes the most important non-state conflict actor of the Colombian internal conflict. In recent years it has been recognised in conflict research that non-state actors must be taken seriously if we want to understand today's internal conflicts. This is the starting point for my analysis of the FARC-EP.*

*Whereas much contemporary research focuses on the economic agendas of conflict actors, the attention in this thesis is on how different organisational resources together reflect a social order of violence beyond the state that embraces both political, economic and symbolic elements. It asks the question of how organisational resources relate to and define internal legitimacy. Drawing upon Christopher Clapham and his notion of organisational effectiveness, indicators such as a clearly defined political project, effective structures and educated leaders will be employed as guiding lines in the empirical study of the FARC-EP. The grounds of the internal legitimacy of the FARC-EP will be established by combining these indicators with insight on the role of self-legitimation of rebels and Max Weber's typology of domination.*

*The most effective self-legitimizing arguments of an organisation may indeed reflect its most important organisational resources. By way of looking into the FARC-EP's self-legitimation, I find that one of its most important organisational resources is its historical memory. The FARC-EP's sense of collective destiny is tied to stories of past suffering, in which the leader of the organisation holds a special position. As regards economic resources, there has been created a "revolutionary mysticism" of the way that economic resources are delegated, as well as a tight control over their management. Hence, the FARC-EP has managed to keep the economic resources a strength to the organisation, rather than a source of serious splits.*

*This thesis shows that in addition to internal structures, political project and level of education and coherence, effective self-legitimizing arguments should be given special attention in order to understand the grounds of internal legitimacy of a specific non-state conflict actor.*

**Key words:** *FARC-EP, guerrilla group, rebel organisation, war economy, social order of violence, self-legitimation, internal legitimacy.*

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who has shown great interest in my thesis, listened and given me good advice on the way.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CDF</b>	Civil Defence Forces
<b>CGSB</b>	Coordinadora Guerrillera Simón Bolívar (Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Movement Coordinating Body)
<b>DANE</b>	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (National Administrative Department of Estadistics)
<b>ELN</b>	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
<b>EMC</b>	Estado Mayor Central- (Central General Staff)
<b>EPL</b>	Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army)
<b>FARC-EP</b>	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- Ejército del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia- People's Army)
<b>HRW</b>	Human Rights Watch
<b>INGO</b>	International Non- governmental Organisation
<b>M-19</b>	Movimiento 19 de abril (19th of April Movement)
<b>MPLA</b>	Movimento Popular de Libertação Popular (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola)
<b>LASO</b>	Latin American Security Operation
<b>NACLA</b>	North American Congress on Latin America
<b>PCC</b>	Partido Comunista Colombiano (Colombian Communist Party)
<b>PCCC</b>	Partido Comunista Colombiano Clandestino (Colombian Clandestine Communist Party)
<b>UCDP</b>	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
<b>UNIR</b>	Unión Izquierdista Revolucionaria (Leftist Revolutionary Union)
<b>UNITA</b>	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)
<b>UP</b>	Unión Patriótica (Patriotic Union)

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## INTRODUCTION

Since Colombia's war for independence (1810-1824), the country has gone through numerous civil wars. The Colombian conflict of today, which in recent years also has turned into a war<sup>1</sup>, is protracted, multifaceted and difficult to resolve. It is of great importance for the conflict's possible resolution not to rely on easy conclusions labelling conflict actors without a deeper knowledge of their dynamics, which are not static but go through transformations.

My work is hence elaborated in the context of the latter acknowledgment, attempting at a better understanding of the conflict actor constituting Colombia's largest guerrilla group, the Marxist-Leninist FARC-EP<sup>2</sup>. In today's world, most conflicts are intrastate and therefore also involve non-state actors, who in some way or another need to obtain resources to subsist<sup>3</sup>. Much attention has accordingly been paid in recent years to the economic approach to conflict. Some theorists claim that war may play strategic roles when it comes to economic functions (Keen, 1996, 2000) and authority (Reno, 2000), establishing "alternative systems of profit and power" (Keen, 1996: 14). Others (Collier, 2000; Collier and Hoeffler, 2001) focus more specifically on the importance of economic aspects as *causes* of conflict, arguing that economic opportunity constitutes the most important likelihood for rebellion.

In the Colombian case, economic opportunity was not the cause of rebellion when it arose in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, however, economic resources are crucial for the FARC-EP to subsist, and it is entitled the richest guerrilla group of the world (Howe, 2001). Economic activities however do not comprise economic aspects only, for no human activity exists separately from its historical, political, and social context. Bakonyi and Stuvøy (2005) suggest that economic activities make up a form of social interaction. The FARC-EP can hence be seen as a *social order of violence beyond the state* whose establishment of legitimacy should be given special attention (Bakonyi and Stuvøy, 2005).

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<sup>1</sup> Armed conflict is defined by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program as "a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths". An intermediate armed conflict results in at least 25 and fewer than 1000 battle-related deaths per year and an accumulated total of at least 1000 deaths, whereas war is defined as resulting in more than 1000 battle-related deaths per year (Gleditsch et al., 2002: 619).

<sup>2</sup> The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia- People's Army (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- Ejército del Pueblo*)

<sup>3</sup> According to the UCDP, 25 of the 31 armed conflicts that were ongoing in 2005 were intrastate, whereas six were *internationalised* intrastate armed conflicts. In an 'internationalised intrastate' armed conflict the government, the opposition, or both sides receive military support from other governments (Harbom et al., 2006: 618).

## Research Question

My approach is therefore to study this order of violence through its organisational resources, with a focus on its economic, political and symbolic dimensions. These organisational resources make up the basis of the internal legitimacy of the social order in question. My research question is hence the following:

*How do the FARC-EP's organisational resources relate to and define the organisation's internal legitimacy?*

Accordingly, I will investigate how economic aspects interact with the non-economic resources that together constitute the basis of the internal legitimacy of the organisation. In so doing, I intend to look at its war economy as well as its organisational resources involving internal structure, identity and leadership. My claim is that these are crucial factors for the study of any guerrilla order. By means of literature mostly written by Colombian academics, but also with the help of INGO documents, governmental reports, newspaper articles and personal testimonies, I will assess how this particular organisation creates internal legitimacy within its social order of violence.

## The Relevance to Peace Studies

As pointed out by Rufin (2000: 22-26), non-state actors and their economic agendas must be taken seriously if we want to understand today's internal conflicts. It is also important to recognise how economy interacts with other factors that settle a conflict actor's stability and strength. In Colombia, the government's recent strategy of concentrating a high number of troops in the FARC-EP's strongholds has not defeated this guerrilla group. It has rather favoured strategies of the FARC-EP to conduct military attacks outside this area in order to distract the Army and create new areas of consolidation. For any future peace strategy to be successful, knowledge on what actually happens on the ground is therefore necessary.

Some would say that to study a 'terrorist' group<sup>4</sup> is to approve of it. However, as Barker (2001: 11) recognises, "an historical or empirical study of legitimation requires an acknowledgement of the variety of human political values", and he further adds that "normative aspirations should not prevent a study of a distinguishing feature (...)". My intention here is to contribute to an enhanced understanding of a particular conflict actor, despite and because of its distinguishing features. In this study I employ indicators and theories for understanding how guerrilla groups are organised, in order to conduct an empirical study of the FARC-EP that can establish its basis of internal legitimacy.

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<sup>4</sup> The FARC-EP has been labelled as a terrorist organisation both by the U.S. and the E.U.



## CHAPTER I: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

### Research Context

Being Colombia's largest guerrilla force, the FARC-EP<sup>5</sup> is a very important object of study. It is an actor of a conflict that along with only a handful other conflicts in the world<sup>6</sup> had the intensity of war in the year of 2005.

Internal conflicts persisted after the Cold War, although political and economic support to non-state conflict actors in the form that was known as 'war by proxy'<sup>7</sup> collapsed. Guerrilla groups were then led to adapt to a more business-oriented attitude (Rufin, 2000: 23-24), and hence to establish war economies<sup>8</sup>. In the case of the FARC, foreign economic support has never been significant (Rangel, 2000: 582), but the group's income has grown radically, especially after the coca boom in the second half of the 1980s (Gutiérrez, 2004: 265). The FARC has demonstrated high skills in obtaining resources, enabling the group to recruit more members. It has established broad-based underground economies which invest both in illicit economies and within the country's formal economy. Globalisation has facilitated resources to circulate, linking these to foreign markets and generating revenues in foreign currencies (Rangel, 2000: 577-78).

An economic approach to conflict is therefore highly relevant in the new context of civil wars, and research should cross the borders of the nation state. Non-state actors must be taken seriously, and no policy intervention can be made without a serious analysis of war economies in their particular contexts. Economy has namely never before played such a crucial role in war (Rufin, 2000: 22-26). However, conflicts are very complex social phenomena, which cannot be explained by one factor alone. My starting point was therefore a critique against conclusions drawn from quantitative studies undertaken by the World Bank concerning the risk of conflict. According to Collier and Hoeffler, who have done several

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<sup>5</sup> Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia- Ejército del Pueblo: "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia- People's Army". The "-EP" was added to the group's official name in 1982 (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 35). In popular use the "-EP" is however absent, and since I also refer to the organisation in the years before 1982, I will refer to it as "the FARC" throughout my work.

<sup>6</sup> According to the UCDP, there were 31 armed conflicts in 2005, of which five could be categorised as wars: the ones taking place in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kashmir, Nepal and Colombia (Harbom et al., 2006: 618-19).

<sup>7</sup> During the Cold War some actors of internal conflict were given support by one of the two superpowers in order to destabilise forces operating in the zones of the other. This was for instance the case regarding UNITA and MPLA in Angola.

<sup>8</sup> A war economy is defined by Bakonyi and Stuvøy (2005) as a form of social organization dependent on both the existence of a system of domination and an economic structure guaranteeing the means for support of the system. The use or threat of use of force is employed in order to achieve access to and control over resources and labour. According to Le Billon (2000: 1), it is "the production, mobilisation, and allocation of economic resources to sustain a conflict (e.g. taxation, commerce or looting)".

statistical analyses of all civil wars<sup>9</sup> between 1960/1965 and 1999, the risk of conflict is especially increased by a country's dependency on primary commodity exports. Moreover, they argue that "*it is the feasibility of predation which determines the risk of conflict*" (Collier, 2000:4). This feasibility is further defined by the percentage of a country's gross domestic product represented by primary commodity exports; when this is around 28-32 %, the risk of conflict is at its highest (Collier, 2000: 4-6, Collier and Hoeffler, 2001: 8). This is explained by the fact that low dependence provides little incentive for rebel groups to capture rents, whereas high dependence, as for instance in Saudi Arabia, may result in a government so well-financed that rebellion is militarily infeasible (Collier and Hoeffler, 2001: 4).

The conceptualisations of 'greed' and 'grievance' were hence created, involving claims that rebels are motivated by self-enrichment rather than objective grievances. The greed account has been highly criticised (Keen, 2000; Ballentine, 2002; Guáqueta, 2002; Gutiérrez, 2004), and I also maintain that these findings are overly simplistic, leaving out grievance-related factors such as ethnic and religious divisions, horizontal inequality, and weak administrations. It is interesting that Max Weber at a 1910 meeting of the German Sociological Society stated the following (Weber cited in Swedberg, 1998: 54-55):

I would like to protest the statement by one of the speakers that some one factor, be it technology or economy, can be the 'ultimate' or 'true' cause of another. If we look at the causal lines, we see them run, at one time, from technical to economic and political matters, at another from political to religious and economic ones, etc. There is no resting point. In my opinion, the view of historical materialism, frequently espoused, that the economic is in some sense the ultimate point in the chain of causes, is completely finished as a scientific proposition.

As a matter of fact, Collier and Hoeffler later weakened their greed-thesis, emphasising to a higher degree the *opportunity* for organised violence (Collier and Hoeffler, 2001: 3-6). They however admit that an opportunity can at the same time involve a motivation caused by grievance: Their indicator of foregone income<sup>10</sup> of which the proxy of male secondary school enrolment is included, gives us a clue about opportunity for rebellion while at the same time it can be interpreted as an objective economic grievance (Collier and Hoeffler, 2001:4-5). It is obviously not clear whether greed and grievance be different phenomena, because grievances can involve a material motivation (Humphreys, 2003: 4).

It does however seem plausible that local war economies influence the character, duration and intensity of internal conflicts (Ballentine, 2002: 267-73). Some empirical evidence states that wars tend to last longer when rebels finance themselves using illegal commodities (Fearon, 2004; Ross, 2004). Quantitative methods like the ones employed by Fearon and Ross are however similar to Collier and Hoeffler's, transforming correlations into

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<sup>9</sup> A 'civil war' is also here defined as an internal conflict with one thousand or more battle- related deaths per year.

<sup>10</sup> 'Foregone income' here means the income forgone by joining a rebel group. According to Collier and Hoeffler (2001: 4), rebellions are more likely to occur when foregone income is unusually low.

wider assumptions without a deeper understanding of the complex mechanisms that underlie those correlations. Freely quoting Weber, “some one factor” (here illegal commodities) cannot “be the ‘ultimate’ or ‘true’ cause of another”. My concern with resources is consequently neither on type of resource nor on their correlations regarding the onset or duration of conflict, but on their significance within a social system.

Keen (2000: 31-33) stresses the importance of understanding how greed and grievance interact, and together with Berdal (1997: 798-99) he also gives a framework of the functions of violence as political or non-political. Among the non-political functions are economic functions, security functions, and psychological functions. The political functions can be progressive or regressive, that is, working towards or against a diminution of political and economic inequalities. Reno<sup>11</sup> also addresses non-political functions of violence that are nonetheless not directly related to ‘greed’, such as security functions. He claims that details of social relations of armed groups illustrate the variable nature of violence (Reno, 2004: 16). In his view, a closer examination of the social institutions shaping the range of opportunities available to armed actors is necessary in order to reach an understanding of the degree to which particular communities see the use of violence as legitimate. For example, he explains how the locally legitimate practice of young men’s initiation societies<sup>12</sup> was an important factor in the recruitment and mobilisation of young men to the CDF militias in Sierra Leone, whose purpose of wartime behaviour was to guarantee each other’s security. Shared bonds of social reciprocity can be used as a basis for establishing order in a group; Reno therefore sees the importance of looking into how different political organisations are formed and maintained. This is crucial for international engagement in internal conflict to be successful, because people perpetrate violence and use resources in dramatically different ways. When

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<sup>11</sup> Reno especially deals with forms of authority and the category of collapsing states, and is well known within the literature for his concept of the ‘shadow state’. The concept involves a particular relationship between corruption and politics. In the shadow state, rulers in patronage-based political systems choose to exercise political control through market channels rather than to build effective state institutions. Individuals must hence seek the ruler’s personal favour to secure his or her conditions (Reno, 2000: 44-48).

<sup>12</sup> In most African cultures, youth go through traditional initiation rites on their way to adulthood. The youngsters are taken away from the community by an elder to an isolated area, where they are taught about adulthood: male and female roles, the meaning of puberty, community traditions and relevant skills. Although these are not relevant details of social relations in the case of the FARC, this serves as an example of aspects other than economic that may motivate participation in a violent order. These shared social bonds could also possibly be used to promote peace; see for instance “Mozambique: Repairing the Ravages of War. Initiation Societies and Community Schooling”, *IK Notes* No. 33, June 2001, to be found at <http://www.worldbank.org/afr/ik/iknt33.pdf#search=%22initiation%20societies%22>, accessed 8 October, 2006.

this is not taken into account, international engagement sometimes does more bad than good (Reno, 2004: 1-23).

Bakonyi and Stuvøy (2005: 359-82), taking a step further, provide an analytical framework of a *social order of violence*. They argue that prolonged wars are characterised by the emergence of social orders of violence beyond the state, and that economic activities are a form of social interaction. They have elaborated an analytical framework in which social orders can be systematised on a continuum according to their degree of institutionalisation of authority. A warlord system and a quasi-state system of violence are the two extremes on this continuum according to their degree of institutionalisation. The quasi-state system represents the most institutionalised social order, to the degree that it controls a specific territory and the economic resources within it. Such a system needs local support, which again requires the implementation of certain rules and norms. In order to underline its legitimacy, the system must also provide security and welfare-services, as well as an organisational apparatus with rationalised rules along with a partial bureaucratisation. As the forms of economic activities must be linked to sustainability concerns, it is expected that robbery and abductions do not represent prime economic activities in a quasi-state order of violence, and that violence is minimised because of the prominence of trade and production. The world-lord system, on the other hand, usually does not present complex political agendas, but draws its power position upon personal loyalties. A single warlord cannot stabilise political authority through the institutionalisation of legitimacy, but receives partial support from certain groups within his territory. This however results in frequent re-organisations of political authority, and makes it difficult for a centralised organisation of the economy to take place.

All the systems of violence along this continuum, although very distinguishable, have important structural aspects in common. They should all be seen as determined by economic, political as well as symbolic aspects. When studying insurgent groups, therefore, special attention should be given to how they establish legitimacy, which will also enhance our understanding of the system's level of institutionalisation of authority (Bakonyi and Stuvøy, 2005: 359-60).

Ballentine argues that internal group attributes such as organisational resources, identity, leadership and economic resources work in combination with opportunity structures in the maintenance of large-scale collective action. She follows Tarrow's definition of opportunity structures as "consistent- but not necessarily formal or permanent- dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure" (Tarrow, cited in Ballentine, 2002: 281).

In view of the evolving discussion on economy and legitimacy, as well as the question of how political organisations are formed and maintained, I have decided to direct attention to the organisational resources, including economic, of the FARC. In line with

Bakonyi and Stuvøy's framework, I will see this guerrilla group as constituting a social order of violence beyond the state in which economic, political and symbolic aspects interact. I will look at the way that the FARC establishes legitimacy by analysing specific organisational resources of this social order of violence and by looking at its self-legitimizing discourse. In the next section I will explain what resources I specifically focus on, and how some of these are connected to one another. My overall approach therefore is to understand this non-state conflict actor by looking into its social institutions, norms, rules, and narratives, which constitute its basis of internal legitimacy and collective identity. These social parameters will then also be applied when investigating the economic activities of FARC.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

The question now is: how will I proceed in order to answer the research question on a micro level? I will here present the overall concept of organisational resources, and explain the specific parameters according to which I operationalise this concept in my study. Thereafter, I will discuss legitimation and legitimacy.

Legitimation as this concept is understood by Barker (2001) is an *activity* as opposed to the abstract *quality* of legitimacy. This activity of claiming legitimacy is indeed important for a belief in the legitimacy of an order to exist. Along with organisational resources it therefore also makes up a basis of internal legitimacy.

Max Weber's concept of legitimate order, on the other hand, indicate correspondence between the type of domination and forms of administration in relation to legitimacy. Therefore Weber's theory is a basis for the discussion of how the organisational resources and self-legitimation of a guerrilla group relate to and define internal legitimacy.

### **Organisational Resources**

Broadly speaking, organisational resources will be considered here as aspects that in some way or another contribute to organisational effectiveness. Consequently, these include both non-economic and economic resources, and will be accounted for below.

Most of the *non-economic* organisational resources will be operationalised according to Clapham's indicators of organisational effectiveness. Clapham has analysed African insurgencies and has worked out some very interesting indicators of the extent to which a guerrilla group is organisationally effective. These indicators are in my view applicable to insurgencies also outside Africa, because they involve such universal organisational features

as leadership, education, effective structures, coherence, and discipline. Legitimacy to Weber is about whether the political power of the leadership is stable and effective within a certain order, and these indicators give some useful answers as to whether that is the case within the FARC. They can also help establish the level of institutionalisation of authority of the organisation. The indicators can be summarised in the following way (Clapham, 1998: 1-18):

1) Educated leaders: A necessary, but not sufficient condition for organisational effectiveness. Disciplined movements need clearly defined political projects.

2) The way in which the group develops or decays over time. The dispensability of the leader is here a crucial aspect.

3) Common principles and goals, effective structures. Formal structures should possess some autonomy in order to be effective. Formalised training on the organisation, its aims and ideology is also crucial.

4) Coherence: Ability to stay united. Splits are good indicators of the lines on which an organisation is organised- personalist movements tend to split on personal lines, ethnic movements on ethnic lines, etc.

5) Level of discipline, included the level of discipline among child soldiers, and whether there are underlying social structures which permit the maintenance of a high level of discipline.

6) Relations with the group's host societies<sup>13</sup> when it comes to:

- ideologies and organisational models, or, as this is difficult to pin down, how the insurgent group relates to the disjunction between indigenous ethnicities and post-colonial statehood.
- whether the group has established itself in areas where the leader has his own origins.
- the extent to which the relationship between the group and its host societies is of common interest. To what extent the group controls/exploits the population, or conversely, represents the aspirations of the population.
- whether the members of the group live together with its host society on a daily basis, living and eating like the peasantry, and whether they are "bombed together", which could increase the level of solidarity between them.

The *economic* resources of the FARC will be addressed from the point of departure that the Colombian conflict is not caused by economic opportunities or greed, as in the economic approach to conflict represented by Collier and Hoeffler. Resources are however extremely important to this guerrilla group, and I will therefore look at the activities of its war

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<sup>13</sup> My focus is not primarily the relationship between the FARC and its host societies, but rather concerns *internal* structures. I will therefore only employ the last two of the indicators concerning relationship with host societies, because these are interesting in the discussion of the FARC's war economy.

economy; at its ways of extracting, reproducing and distributing economic resources. My main concern is that economic activities are important to the functioning of the social system of the FARC, and therefore, knowledge about these is necessary in order to comprehend how the system operates. I now turn to the concept of identity, which will facilitate a consideration of how economic activities are justified and legitimated within the FARC.

A sense of identity is another *non-economic* organisational resource that I will address in this thesis. A strong sense of collective identity contributes to Clapham's indicator of coherence; to the ability to stay united. The aspect of identity embraces many concepts and questions, and in my investigation of the FARC it revolves around 'social identity', 'collective identity', 'narratives', 'memory-narratives', and 'historical identity'. Consequently, I find these important to account for here.

Social identity is defined by Tajfel (1981: 255) as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups), together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership". Tajfel admits that this is a limited definition of identity; it is a definition that assumes that *some* aspects of an individual's view of him- or herself are contributed by the membership of social groups. As I am interested in the legitimation of one particular membership, that of the FARC, this definition serves my purposes of staying within the scope of the particular identity derived from such a membership. Affective and evaluative processes are here involved that arise from the felt attachment between the self and the in-group (Brewer, 2001: 21). When the in-group has been incorporated into the sense of self, and the self is experienced as an integral part of the in-group, social identification has taken place. Once this occurs at a high level, the group's goals and welfare become connected to one's own well-being. According to Tajfel (1981:255), one membership has then been preferred over others; although memberships may vary in salience over time and may constitute a function of a variety of social situations.

My focus on identity construction within the FARC is an attempt to understand the group's internal cohesion and its collective identity; not its legitimacy among the larger population. Leadership legitimation as well as the social identities from below merge together and create a *collective identity* of the group. This identity is related to that particular group's 'common sense psychology', which suggests a set of beliefs and explanations about causes in everyday life. What these explanations have in common is that they serve the function of legitimation. Narratives are therefore an important object of study: how people construct social reality and make inferences about causes in daily life. These explanations are to a large extent "historical", in that they are specific to particular periods and tend to change over time (Moghaddam, 1998: 158-60). Narratives constitute a collection of stories, beliefs, aspirations, experiences, histories and current explanations that a group holds about itself and about its surroundings. They coherently interrelate historical and recent events and provide a larger

meaning system into which social identities are incorporated (Salomon, 2004: 275-76). Interesting for how this meaning system develops are the hegemonial narratives provided by political leaders. Ahonen (1999) explains that the social constructions of memories are affected by public narratives, and that memory-narratives can be reconstructed, changing the meanings of history. The reconstruction will be affected by new shared aspirations, and the memory-narratives become cultural tools in the construction of collective identity.

Collective identities are namely constructed, not “primordial”, that is, they are not rooted strictly in collective experiences. They do however not come out of nothing; not just any cultural trait can be exploited in the formation of a group. The leadership of a social order when trying to evoke support has to base its discourse, its raw material, on people’s every day lives. Identification is relational, situational, and flexible, but at the same time it does not come out of thin air. A view opposing extreme instrumentalism is that social identity cannot be seen as a mere construct of ideology, because it in fact emerges from people’s personal experiences (Hylland Eriksen, 2001: 47-66). Movement entrepreneurs fashion their frames at the intersection between a target population’s culture and their own values and goals (Tarrow, 1994: 123). They typically intend to downplay the difference between personal experiences and group history, merging these together in a credible way. Very often this “credible mixture” includes well developed myths of origin and past suffering (Hylland Eriksen, 2001: 58, 61). Therefore, the group’s and the country’s history of personal and collective experiences is important, as will be shown later. In line with Hylland Eriksen (2001: 50-51) it is argued here that limitations form the objective foundations of social identification. There are namely aspects of identity that are not chosen, because one cannot do away with one’s lived history. These aspects are incorporated and implicit, and even if people relate to them as reflexive agents, they do so within limitations.

I will therefore look at the FARC’s self-legitimizing discourse and the hegemonial narratives used within it: political symbolism and rhetoric that evoke personal experiences; as these are visible indicators revealing aspects of the FARC’s collective identity. In order to do this I will employ Barker’s perspective of archetypal rebel self-legitimation.

### **The Self-Justifying Activities of Rulers, Staff and Subjects: Legitimation**

In his book *Legitimizing Identities*, Rodney Barker addresses not the abstract *quality* of ‘legitimacy’, but the *activity* of ‘legitimation’; the self-justifying activities of rulers, staff and subjects claiming legitimacy. Barker draws on what he calls “a neglected but central aspect of the work of Weber” (Barker, 2001: 13), who identified this activity of legitimation as distinct from the ascribed quality of legitimacy. The study of legitimation as Barker describes it does



not require judgements about moral worth or theological truths, nor of whether the activity of legitimation reflects a psychological need (Barker, 2001: 4, 21).

Weber identified legitimation as a defining characteristic of government whose character and manner of expression varied with the formal and substantive character of the regime (Barker, 2001: 13), which can be seen from the following quotation (Weber, 1968: 953):

For a domination, this kind of justification of its legitimacy is much more than a matter of theoretical or philosophical speculation; it rather constitutes the basis of very real differences in the empirical structure of domination. The reason for this fact lies in the generally observable need of any power, or even of any advantage of life, to justify itself.

Weber himself actually saw self-legitimation (the justification of the legitimacy of a form of domination) as constituting the basis of the type of empirical structure of domination. Barker's emphasis on this aspect is therefore very useful in the investigation of the legitimacy of an order. Rulers justify themselves to themselves through a variety of rituals, rhetoric, and dramatisations in order to cultivate an identity distinguished from that of ordinary men and women. Furthermore, rulers need to legitimate themselves not only in their own eyes, but also in the eyes of their immediate staff, what Weber calls the chief's "administrative staff". Weber further contrasts the staff with 'subjects', as does Barker (2001:59). Likewise, the members of the staff not only need to legitimate themselves collectively to themselves, but in the eyes of the ordinary subjects as well. As follows, ordinary subjects also legitimate themselves to themselves.

Along these lines, the ruler and his staff attempt at convincing themselves of the rights of their position. As it is characteristic of governments to claim legitimacy, an unlegitimated state is a contradiction in terms; it is all a matter of degree and not whether a state is legitimated or not (Barker, 2001: 20-1). A useful question, on the other hand, is to ask in what way, and with what success, a government or another type of ruler claims legitimacy (Barker, 2001: 16). Barker stresses the first question the most; and here he is more elaborate than Weber. As legitimation is an observable human activity, Barker (2001: 23) maintains that the study of it would broaden the scope of enquiry into the activities of rulers. It could possibly also raise a more richly dimensional account of these activities and of the character and consequences of self-legitimation.

In fact, the conviction of one's right to a position can be all the more intense in the identity of rebels, who lack palaces or government offices, having perhaps only a belief in their authority. Self-legitimation is a defining aspect of their political activity, and they, just as governments, define themselves as set apart from those they seek to govern. A select group is identified that is uniquely qualified to appropriate the state. The members of this group are

marked off by piety, courage, insight or dedication. They will be characterised in a way that stresses their exceptional nature (Barker, 2001: 89-94).

The self-legitimation of rebels is likely to mirror the self-legitimation of the demonised opposing party, and also to draw claims from the values and governing legitimations of their own society. Communists may for instance use the values of democracy, nationalism and patriotism, but challenge those of capitalism. In democratic states, legitimation will most likely refer to popular sovereignty, but the democratic argument may vary according to the function or consequences of the argument for the rebels' own sense of authority (Barker, 2001: 89-91).

In order to justify its violent actions, a rebel group needs to demonise those it is opposing; to depict an enemy which is dangerous to the community in question, and by giving an image of itself as the protector of that community. Accordingly, their discourse and actions serve to confirm their authority to rule (Barker, 2001: 91-4). The language of rebellion is hence filled with accounts of heroes and heroism, and the rebel leaders aspire to heroic status, being passionate in their internal legitimation. The semi-secrecy with which rebels operate is tactical, and is a means of cultivating loyalty, identity and solidarity. Symbolism, ritual nomenclature, signs, passwords, oaths, and rebel songs performed in secret all contribute to the internal cohesion of the rebel group. In order to achieve the latter, rebels need to believe in themselves (Barker, 2001: 98-9).

Political authority thus requires a cultural frame in order to define itself (Barker, 2001: 98); it needs to create a distinctive identity. David Snow and associates (1986: 464) by using the concept of 'frame alignment' refer to "the linkage of individual and social movement interpretive orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values and beliefs and social movement activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary". Symbols that can mediate among the cultural underpinnings of those they appeal to, and still reflect the group's own beliefs and aspirations, are most likely to be chosen (Tarrow, 1994: 122). Put differently, rebels have to fit themselves into their social setting and adapt to the receptivity of their host societies (Clapham, 1998: 12). Again, the construction of demonising narratives about the enemy is also a vital activity for rebels to believe in what they do, because the legitimation of the existing rulers denies their own legitimating discourse (Barker, 2001: 97-99).

Concluding from the above, it can be very difficult for rebels to surrender, given that it would involve a contradiction between their self-description and perception, and a re-description would become necessary. To create a whole new description of one's group and hence of every single member's own identity, can be even more difficult to swallow than a tactical or other type of failure (Barker, 2001: 105).

Barker's complement to the understanding of legitimacy for my thesis is very interesting because he treats not only how rulers of states, but how *rebels* justify themselves and take part in the active creation of a distinctive identity and internal legitimacy. His theory is therefore of instrumental use, as it contains indicators of how this is done. The FARC controls large areas of the Colombian territory; yet these are not always fixed, but changing. It is therefore difficult to know who the 'the subjects' are, and whether they see their order as legitimate. It is however feasible to look at how the leaders of the group ('the rulers') justify their own actions and how they create a 'Farian' collective identity, not forgetting that they have to take "some set of individual interests, values and beliefs" of their subjects into account and also relate to their cultural underpinnings. The way they choose to do this of course has consequences for 'ordinary subjects'. I now turn to Weber's theory of legitimacy.

### **Legitimacy in a Social System:**

#### **Max Weber and the Concept of Legitimate Order**

According to Weber (1968: 31), legitimacy is a necessary element for the existence of a sufficiently stable social order. The probability that social action will be governed by the belief in the existence of a legitimate order is referred to as the "validity" of that order. The content of a social relationship will hence be called an order when action is oriented toward determinable "maxims", and when this orientation occurs because it is regarded by the actor as obligatory or exemplary. The probability that action will orient itself this way will further increase when the order is held to define a model or to be binding; then it enjoys 'legitimacy'. It is the subjective *belief* in the validity of an order that constitutes the valid order itself, as opposed to a legal treatment of it (Weber, 1968: 31-33). Within an order there may exist different interpretations of the meaning of the order, but even these contradictory systems may be recognised as valid as long as each interpretation determines the course of action. According to Weber (1968: 33) there is an undeniable relationship between the probability of orientation to the belief in the validity of an order and the relevant course of economic action. The validity of an order nonetheless diminishes if the generally understood meaning of an order evades.

## Domination<sup>14</sup> and Legitimacy: The Three Pure Types of Authority<sup>15</sup>

There are according to Weber three types of legitimate domination, related to the basis of the claims to legitimacy made by the person in authority:

(1) Legal authority, based on *rational* grounds- that is, on a belief in the legality of performed rules and the right of the person in authority to issue commands.

(2) Traditional authority, based on *traditional* grounds- that is, on a belief in the sanctity of traditions and the right of the person in authority to issue commands.

(3) Charismatic authority, based on *charismatic* grounds- that is, resting on an individual person's exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character, and of his right to ordain normative patterns of order (Weber, 1968: 215-16).

The rule over a considerable amount of people normally requires an administrative staff, whose members may be bound to obedience to their superior(s) for a number of motives. The type of domination is largely determined by the quality of these motives. The belief in legitimacy, a necessity for an order to be sufficiently stable, is also necessary for a sufficiently reliable basis of domination to be established. The kind of legitimacy that is claimed is especially important to classify, because the type of obedience<sup>16</sup>, administrative staff and mode of exercising authority will all depend on it (Weber, 1968: 212-13).

I will now briefly go through the forms of administration that correspond to each type of domination. According to Swedberg (1998: 58), it is however rarely noted that there is also an important economic dimension to Weber's analysis of domination, a fact that is of particular interest because of my analysis of the FARC's war economy. The different administrative types are paid for in different ways, and the ways in which they are staffed also affect the economy. I will therefore also note the economic aspects of these of each administrative type. Inherent in *legal authority* is that there is a line between the incumbent in a position and the position itself. The officials are also separated from "the means of production or administration", as Weber (1968: 219) describes it. The "superior", for instance the elected president of a state, is also subject to an impersonal order in that he, in his commands and dispositions, orients his actions to the order. According to Weber (1968: 223-25), the purest form of administration in the legal type of domination is the bureaucracy, in that it fundamentally means domination through knowledge and a sense of duty as to what concerns the officials. It is the most efficient and the most rational known means of

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<sup>14</sup> 'Domination' according to Weber (1968: 53) is the "probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons".

<sup>15</sup> Weber's typology of legitimate domination can alternatively be translated as authority. 'Authority' is hence not a specification of the basis of compliance (Weber, 1968: 299).

<sup>16</sup> 'Obedience' is defined by Weber (1968: 215) as action that follows a course taking the content of the command as the basis of action for its own sake, this without regard to the actor's own attitude to the value of the command.

exercising authority over human beings. Officials receive a fixed salary, the amount of which depends on the rank of their office, and there is also usually a pension. The bureaucracy is typically paid for through taxation, presupposing a money economy. A state bureaucracy is indispensable for rational capitalism to work (Weber, 1968: 975).

The basis of rule in *traditional authority* primarily derives from the sanctity of old rules and powers. From the basis of the masters' traditional status they are obeyed, as they are also designated according to traditional rules. In the simplest case this type of organised rule is based on personal loyalty, and the staff consequently does not consist of officials but of personal retainers. Personal loyalty then, also determines the relationship between the administrative staff and the "personal master" (Weber, 1968: 226-7). The most important form of traditional authority is patrimonialism, defined by Weber as a regime in which all political and economic rights are regarded by the ruler as his personal rights. He constantly tries to enlarge his own personal fortune, with very irrational results: "The ruler's favour and disfavour, grants and confiscations, continuously create new wealth and destroy it again" (Weber, 1968: 1099). Patrimonial offices are paid for by the ruler himself- the larger his personal fortune, the larger his administration. The general effect on the economy is a discouragement of rational capitalism and an encouragement of traditional economic behaviour as well as certain kinds of political capitalism<sup>17</sup> (Weber, 1968: 1095).

Examples of *charismatic authority* include prophets, warrior heroes and great demagogues, described as having superhuman qualities. The "charismatic administrative staff" will be made up of followers of the charismatic leader, who are not technically trained, but are chosen in terms of their charismatic qualities. The validity of charisma depends on recognition on the part of those subject to authority. In genuine charisma the basis of legitimacy lies in the subjects' conception of duty to recognise this genuineness and to act accordingly. The members must therefore recognise the new obligations that the leader might preach, create or demand (Weber, 1968: 241-244).

At first, the charismatic community shares everything according to need, and the staff finances itself through voluntary gift. No administrative organ exists, no formal rules, no hierarchy; rather agents who have been provided with authority by their chief. The charismatic type of domination however goes through a routinisation, and charisma becomes less pure. The financing of the administration also goes through changes as the staff members try to introduce stable salaries. The charismatic organisation hence transforms into some kind of patrimonial or feudal organisation (Weber, 1968: 243-50). The impact of charismatic

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<sup>17</sup> 'Political capitalism' in Weber's writings is a type of capitalism in which profit-making is made possible via the state, for example through contracts with the state. Orientations of profit-making can involve such things as opportunities for predatory profit and opportunities for "unusual transactions" between the state and state agencies. In modern capitalism the defence industry is often an example of political capitalism (Swedberg, 2005: 199-200).

authority on the economy obviously differs at different stages. This type of domination is initially hostile to all forms of systematic activity. When it has gone through the phase of routinisation, it is usually a conservative force (Weber, 1968: 1118).

The basis of legitimacy by virtue of tradition is the oldest and most universal one, whereas the most common form today is the belief in legality, that is, enactments that are formally correct and established in a familiar manner- as when using the ballot. The willingness to submit to an order led by only one person or a small group always depends on whether the one(s) imposing it is believed to enjoy legitimate authority (Weber, 1968: 37).

Moreover, there is normally a variety of interests and ascriptions of legitimacy that determines submission to an order. There may for example be a mixture of adherence to tradition and belief in legality, and the actors belonging to the order themselves are often not aware of the degree to which their adherence rests upon convention or law<sup>18</sup> (Weber, 1968: 36-37).

### **Discussion: The Weberian Understanding of Legitimacy**

Max Weber's conception of legitimacy is the most dominant model for empirical investigations of legitimacy. It however differs from the conventional meaning of the concept, which involves a normative evaluation of a political regime- how its decisions are justified, the correctness of its procedures, and whether it treats its subjects fairly (Grafstein, 1981: 457).

Legitimacy to Weber is namely about individuals' belief that their order is legitimate, a fact that has been criticised by, among others, Robert Grafstein. "In the end", he says (1981: 456), "Weber virtually identifies legitimacy with stable and effective political power, reducing it to a routine submission to authority". Grafstein further objects that for Weber, legitimacy is simply a matter of fact, the fact that citizens hold a certain belief. The essence of Weber's concept of legitimacy is hence the individuals' sense of duty, obligation, or what ought to be done according to rules, principles or commands issued by the authority (Spencer, 1970: 126). According to Weber himself (1968: 33), as we have seen, there is in the ordinary sense of the word 'causal', a causal relationship between the probability of orientation to the subjective *belief* in the validity of an order and the relevant course of economic action, as outlined above.

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<sup>18</sup> 'Convention' is an order whose validity is externally guaranteed in that deviation from it will provoke a general and significant reaction of disapproval. 'Law' is an order whose validity is externally guaranteed in that a staff will bring about compliance or avenge violation in order to apply physical or psychological coercion (Weber, 1968: 34).

The “simple matter of fact” that members of an order (i.e. conflict actors) hold certain beliefs can therefore have enormous implications when it comes to conflict behaviour. As Weber implies, beliefs in the validity of an order are namely reflected in the course of action. One must therefore look at the course of action of the order as a whole in order to understand what kind of legitimacy it holds. It is “useful to classify the types of domination according to the kind of claim to legitimacy typically made by each”, because the type of obedience, administrative staff and mode of exercising authority will differ according to the latter (Weber, 1968: 213). However, it can be argued that the relationship between the kind of legitimacy that is claimed and the respective course of action is reciprocal and organic more than in any simple sense causal (Barker, 2001: 38). What is important is that a relationship indeed exists.

For my empirical inquiries, Weber’s identification of legitimacy is consequently very useful because I am asking whether the FARC enjoys a high degree of internal legitimacy and cohesion (do its members submit routinely to authority, and if so, on what bases?). My assumption is that the FARC’s members do submit routinely to authority, and that the FARC enjoys internal legitimacy. The question therefore becomes: what kind of legitimacy is claimed? I certainly do not intend to give a normative evaluation of the FARC’s political regime; neither of whether its subjects are treated fairly nor of the correctness of its procedures.

## **Outline of Thesis**

In keeping with the theoretical perspectives and parameters sketched out, my work will be organised as follows:

Chapter 2 will provide an historical perspective, as this is necessary in order to understand the historical context of the conflict, the functions of violence (Berdal and Keen, 1997: 798-99) at the time of the origins of the FARC, as well its self-legitimizing narratives.

Chapter 3 will address the organisational resources that according to Clapham are crucial to the effectiveness of a guerrilla group. This will be done with the help of all of his indicators of effectiveness, except the two last ones concerning relationship to host societies. These will rather be dealt with in the next chapter, as they concern social aspects related to the FARC’s war economy<sup>19</sup>.

Chapter 4 will provide a study of the FARC’s war economy as a form of social interaction. The question of whether the case of the FARC fits Collier and Hoeffler’s findings

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<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note however, that none of Clapham’s indicators is directly related to economic resources.

will be briefly discussed, and I will look at the social aspects that the economic approach to conflict does not account for. These social aspects include the symbiotic economic relationship that exists in the FARC's strongholds, and the failure of the state to recognise the coca farmers' right to citizenship.

Chapter 5 will first provide an examination of the FARC leadership's legitimating activities, employing Barker's account of archetypal rebel legitimation. This will also involve their setting themselves apart as distinct from "ordinary subjects" as well as a brief investigation into the counter-legitimisations of the ruling part (the state). The group's identity as constructed by its leadership and hence symbolic aspects of the system will be covered here, and I will address how some of the contradictions between the FARC's narratives and their tactics and practice are justified and legitimated. This will explain whether non-political functions of violence such as its war economic system is a problem for internal cohesion.

This chapter will also establish the type of authority and corresponding type of administration reigning within the FARC according to Weber's typology of domination, thus categorising the basis of legitimacy of the FARC. This will be done by drawing on Clapham's indicators addressing the group's level of discipline and coherence, as well as effective structures. These will be employed in order to uncover whether and to what degree there is a "sense of duty, obligation, or what ought to be done according to rules, principles or commands", noted above as the essence of Weber's concept of legitimacy. The latter will give indications on the type of administrative staff of the FARC. Thereafter, Weber's and Barker's theories will be compared in light of the interpretations they produce.



## CHAPTER II: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The modern history of Colombia's internal conflict involves the liquidation of any political movement seen as a threat to the elites; it engrosses armed conflict and war, the consolidation of violent conflict actors, an increase in drug production, the establishment of drug cartels and governmental attempts at extinguishing these. It also revolves around U.S. interference, drug money involved in corruption within politics and institutions, and a sad failure to achieve peace. After all, however, attempts have been made at weakening the traditional influence of the militaries and democratising the regime; and today there seems to be a tendency moving towards a multiparty system within Colombian politics.

### The Internal Conflict in Colombia 1946-2006

According to Sánchez (2004: 20), the liquidation of the *Gaitanista* Movement within Colombian collective memory is the inaugural moment of Colombia's modern history. The *gaitanismo* was the political project of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, whose death in 1948 intensified the violence between liberals and conservatives.

In order to say something about the Colombian conflict, we must therefore at least superficially go back to the circumstances that resulted in the complex phenomenon of The Violence, which took place between 1946 and 1960<sup>20</sup> (Pécaut, 2004: 77). While the non-resolution of The Violence has meant ending up in the diversity of violence of the last decades, today's armed confrontation is not the result of an inevitable culmination of its historical antecedents (Sánchez, 2004: 20; 42).

Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was a Liberal politician who gained national acknowledgment as a political figure when he in 1929 reported the massacre committed in 1928 against the banana workers of the United Fruit Company, of which he denounced responsible the government and the Army (Marín, 2004). In 1933 he founded the Leftist Revolutionary Union (*La Unión Izquierdista Revolucionaria- UNIR*), disappointed as he was in the Liberal Government. He thereby attempted to create an alternative to the traditional bipartisan system<sup>21</sup>, and gained the sympathy and support of peasants and members of the working class in his struggle for better working conditions and a more just distribution of land (Sánchez, 1982: 192). His political project was however too difficult to put into effect

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<sup>20</sup> The duration of The Violence varies according to different theorists and databases. The University of Uppsala refers to the Violence as a patrician civil war going on between 1946 and 1958, whereas others denote it to the period of 1946-66 (Bergquist, Peñaranda and Sánchez, 1992). For the University of Uppsala's Conflict Data Program, see <http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/index.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> Since their consolidation in the 1850s, the political system in Colombia has been dominated by two parties; the Liberal and the Conservative (Tuft, 2001: 141).

outside the bipartisan system, and in 1935 he left UNIR behind and returned to the Liberal Party. From within the Liberal Party he created what has been denominated the *Gaitanista* Movement, and in 1944, he started campaigning for the presidential elections (Marín, 2004). The *Gaitanista* Movement was not depicted as a proletarian movement, but as a “people’s movement”<sup>22</sup> (*movimiento del pueblo*) which sought to undermine the stability of the secular bipartisan system, stimulating the rebelliousness of the masses against the conservative and the liberal oligarchies (Sánchez, 1982: 193-5).

The appeal of the two traditional political parties in Colombia had however been reinforced at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, the most important Colombian industry, the coffee production, consisted mostly of smallholders who suffered violent competition between themselves. They depended on allegiance to one of the traditional parties, because that meant allies and favours if their party gained control. This *clientelismo* (patronage) eliminated any social threat to the ruling class (Bergquist, 1992: 65-67). After 1938, there had been a clear movement to the right in Colombian politics, involving a halt of reform, as well as the reversal of land and labour laws that were passed in the mid 1930s. In 1945 a repressive approach towards organised labour was put into effect (Bergquist, 1992: 68-9). The beginning of reaction began, of which the *gaitanismo* played a central part. Gaitán did not win the presidential elections of 1946; the official liberal candidate was Gabriel Turbay, who lost to the conservative candidate Mariano Ospina Pérez. Gaitán however got a significant amount of votes, especially in the most important urban centres of the country (Marín, 2004).

On 7 February 1948, Gaitán organised the “Silent Protest” (“*la Manifestación del Silencio*”) against the political violence that had taken place throughout the country in the past two years. There was already a *de facto* civil war between the Liberal and Conservative parties, marking off the beginning of The Violence. The protest brought more than a hundred thousand people to the main square Plaza de Bolívar in Bogotá, proving how strong the *Gaitanista* Movement had become. This frightened the traditional sectors of the bipartisan system. On 9 April the same year, at 1:05 in the afternoon, Gaitán was killed as he was leaving his office (Marín, 2004). His death brought with it a popular insurrection, one that will be addressed further as I proceed to the history of the FARC.

In order to find a solution to The Violence, the civilian elites called on the military, and in 1953, General Rojas Pinilla took over state power. The Liberals and Conservatives however formed a bipartisan coalition in 1958 in order to regain power; a 16-year power sharing agreement that would exclude other political entities (Tuft, 2001: 144) and disallow

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<sup>22</sup> The “people” for Gaitán consisted of an anti-oligarchic and anti-monopolist block of classes composed by the lower middle class, peasants without land or about to lose it, and the working class (Sánchez, 1982: 193).

any new arenas for opposition (Leal, 2004: 87). This agreement was called The National Front, and was to last until 1974. It permitted the military to handle public order with a great deal of autonomy, and their political guidelines were so unclear that the military high command could add to them its own particular dispositions. These consisted of anti-communism and a political-military conception marked by the Latin American doctrine of national security (Leal, 2004: 87).

Various guerrilla groups were formed during the National Front; among these the FARC, the ELN (*Ejército Nacional de Liberación*), the EPL (*Ejército Popular de Liberación*) and the M-19 (*Movimiento 19 de Abril*). Those trying to raise opposition by peaceful means were also seen as enemies by the system. An indiscriminate use of the exceptional constitutional measure of a 'state of siege'<sup>23</sup> was employed in order to deal with public disorder, and a path was opened for the proliferation of paramilitary organisations: civil defence organisations were permitted to bear arms for private use. The guerrilla problem was not dealt with other than by armed force (Leal, 2004: 87-9).

During the presidential period of President Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala (1978-82), the autonomy of military institutions was further extended. He promulgated the National Security Statute, imposing a state of siege and expanding repression to the cities. The M-19<sup>24</sup> at the beginning of 1980 overtook the Embassy of the Dominican Republic, and held 16 diplomats hostage for two months. A military operation led to the capture of the M-19's leadership who were put on trial at the end of Turbay's government (Leal, 2004: 89-90).

At this stage, the drug economy was about to be activated. The FARC is the guerrilla group which learned to take benefit from this development the most, as it already controlled the peripheral areas where the coca cultivations were developed. Many paramilitary groups, on the other hand, were now formed by drug traffickers such as Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, one of the men close to Pablo Escobar. The conflict consequently grew in intensity, and between 1980-88 it was an intermediate armed conflict, possibly war in several of the years (Gleditsch et al., 2002: 635).

President Belisario Betancur (1982-1986) is remembered for the peace process with the guerrillas, in which he recognised the political character of these by means of an amnesty law (Leal, 2004:90). This in 1984 led to a ceasefire, and subsequently to the formation of the Patriotic Union (*Unión Patriótica-UP*). The UP was a legal political party affiliated with the FARC, supported by the Colombian Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Colombiano-PCC*) and other leftist groups. The party got a considerable amount of votes in the following elections (Molano, 2000: 27). The UP was however exterminated at the end of the 1980s.

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<sup>23</sup> Its consequence being a de facto abolition of the rule of law (Leal, 2004: 88).

<sup>24</sup> Whereas the other rebel organisations mainly operated in rural areas, the M-19 operated in the cities, attacking the constituted regimes directly (Pécaut, 2004: 79).

Most of the UP activists were murdered during President Virgilio Barco's administration (1986-1990) by paramilitaries financed by Pablo Escobar and tolerated by the Army, a phenomenon that has been called the Dirty War (*la Guerra Sucia*). In 1987 the ceasefire was brought to an end after a FARC attack against the Army. The same year, an alliance named the Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Movement Coordinating Body (*Coordinadora Guerrillera Simón Bolívar-CGSB*) was formed between the FARC, the M-19, the EPL and the ELN. (Leal, 2004: 91, 104).

In the overlapping of the presidential periods of Virgilio Barco and Cesar Gaviria (1990-1994), talks with M-19 were more successful. These ended up in the demobilisation of the guerrilla group and the creation of the Democratic Alliance of the M-19, a party that has gained some importance in Colombian politics. Gaviria also created the position of a presidential secretary for defence and security and appointed the first civilian Minister of Defence (Leal, 2004: 92). The new Constitution promulgated in 1991 was viewed as an effort to build up a minimum of state coherence and efficacy and also to democratise the regime. A decentralisation of resources from the centre to the regions and a strengthening of power of Congress and Courts however also meant an increase in the state's barriers in asserting its power and centrality (Bejarano and Pizarro, 2001: 7).

In 1993, Pablo Escobar was killed in Medellín by the Search Bloc, which consisted of military and police personell. It was the most publicised armed operation of Colombia's modern history so far. Interference by drug traffickers in national politics however did not end there, as it was discovered that the Cali cartel contributed to the presidential campaign of Ernesto Samper with more than five million dollars. The aim of this support was to prevent extradition and to somehow have its activities tolerated. The illicit drug trade hence became the most important factor in national security during Samper's government (1994-1998), eager as he was to respond to U.S. pressure and regain confidence (Leal, 2004: 94-98). The sale of cement and gasoline, used in the production of coca paste, was increasingly controlled, and fumigations of coca plantations in the Amazon region were amplified (Ramírez, 2005:58). This policy however did not work well, as the areas devoted to illicit crops continued to increase. Less attention was given to the guerrillas and the paramilitaries, who grew considerably (Leal, 2004: 97-98).

President Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) was elected at a time when a negotiated solution of the conflict seemed especially urgent. Pastrana and his government initiated a new peace effort, but perhaps they were too eager to secure peace quickly (Leal, 2004: 99). Pastrana agreed to the military's withdrawal from five municipalities in the south of Colombia, the so-called demilitarised zone, where the peace talks would take place. The talks broke down in February 2002, after which the FARC has been sharpening its military confrontations (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 118). Since the start of the presidency of Álvaro

Uribe (2002), the organisation has been threatening and terrorising municipal authorities in order to jeopardise the governance of the country (Leal, 2004: 102).

Plan Colombia was put into effect during the presidencies of Pastrana in Colombia and Bill Clinton in the U.S.A., providing Colombia with 860 million dollars, mostly for military assistance. The plan was thereafter regionalised during the presidency of George W. Bush, as it was to cover also Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Venezuela and Panama (Leal, 2004: 101), and was now to be called the “Andean Initiative”. Earlier the same year, the plan had been opposed by the European Parliament.<sup>25</sup> It has been subject to criticism as to the actual motivations for such a plan as well as to the methods used in the ‘war against drugs’ and the ‘war against terrorism’. One serious problem has been futile fumigation of coca fields, involving a lack of differentiation between small scale coca growers, ‘terrorists’, and drug traffickers<sup>26</sup>.

The failure of the peace talks headed by President Andrés Pastrana led a huge part of the Colombian public to discredit a political solution to the conflict. This was one of the reasons why Álvaro Uribe was elected in 2002, as subversion had only grown stronger. The paramilitaries had also expanded, and the Colombian public had become increasingly aware of the precarious security situation. Now, the Colombian internal conflict had developed into a civil war<sup>27</sup>, which was to continue. Uribe’s ‘Democratic Security’ based on a hard-line approach became popular (Leal, 2004: 101-3). In 2004 Uribe put into effect a plan called The Patriotic Plan (*el Plan Patriota*), a military campaign without precedents aimed at fighting the FARC in its areas of influence. 18 000 men have penetrated the jungles of the departments of Caquetá, Meta and Guaviare, searching for the Secretariat of the FARC. The campaign has not succeeded in the latter, but has been able to recuperate control in the urban centres of Cartagena del Chairá, Miraflores, La Macarena, Calamar and El Retorno. However, according to sociologist Gilberto Sánchez at the National University in Bogotá, this has not included a social program.<sup>28</sup> The concentration of troops in the zone of the Patriotic Plan has also been favouring strategies of the FARC of attacking the police in peripheral regions to alleviate the military pressure from the area of the Patriotic Plan<sup>29</sup> and

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<sup>25</sup> Giordano, Al: “Colombia: Bush to regionalise ‘drug war’”, *Green Left Weekly*, Online Edition, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2001/441/441p23b.htm>, accessed 9 June, 2006

<sup>26</sup> For informative accounts on these matters, see f. ex. María Clemencia Ramírez, Winifred Tate (2000) and Nazih Richani (2003: 27-28).

<sup>27</sup> According to the Uppsala database, the intensity of the Colombian internal armed conflict between 1989-2000 as well as in 2003 was intermediate. In the years 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2005 there was however a civil war. The number of battle-related deaths in 2005 was 1356, of which 1178 were attributed to battles between the FARC and government led operations.

<sup>28</sup> “El Patriota: de la contienda militar al desafío social”, *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, 6 May, 2006, <http://www.eltiempo.com>.

<sup>29</sup> Especiales Online: “Ataques de las FARC”, <http://www.semana.com>.

to create new corridors and areas of consolidation<sup>30</sup> (see appendix nr. 2 for major FARC attacks in 2005).

Another project of today's President of Colombia is the so-called "Justice and Peace Law" (*Ley de Justicia y Paz*), a demobilisation program for the paramilitaries. The law has been harshly criticised by INGOs such as Amnesty International<sup>31</sup> and Human Rights Watch<sup>32</sup>, claiming that in reality, it is an impunity law that affects victims' rights and may place judges in difficult and dangerous situations. The law has been modified since it was passed in Colombian Congress in 2005, but is nevertheless still subject to criticism. According to the Bogotan newspaper *El Tiempo* (19 April 2006), 30 431 paramilitaries have demobilised, the highest number of demobilised irregular combatants so far in Colombian history. In accordance with the same newspaper article, referring to a report supported by the Swedish Embassy, crime in Colombia in the zones of disarmament has gone down by 48 %. It only remains to see whether this is a stable number.

Uribe moreover worked for a change in the Constitution that would make his re-election possible, and was indeed re-elected in 2006. A new configuration of political parties has also taken place during the past few years as a result of new electoral rules. The parties are now concentrated around Uribe and the parties supporting him, and around the opposition. On the *uribista*<sup>33</sup> side we find *Partido de la U* ("the U-Party"), *Cambio Radical* ("Radical Change"), the traditional Conservative Party, *Equipo Alas Colombia* ("Team Wings Colombia"), *Colombia Democrática* ("Democratic Colombia"), and *Convergencia Ciudadana* ("Citizens' Convergence"); on the side of the opposition, *Polo Democrático* (Democratic Pole) and the traditional Liberal Party. The parties joining Uribe, the Conservative Party aside, can be characterised as flexible, interim political groups created for electoral purposes which have no clearly defined ideology. There are strong tensions and divisions between their leaders, who in some cases have joined one another only for transitory convenience (Arciniegas and Hernández, 2006). As to the left-centre, the leader of the Democratic Pole Carlos Gaviria received 22% of the presidential votes, which has led to some optimism regarding the creation of a real left wing outside the traditional two party system.

As to negotiations to take place between Uribe's government and the FARC, there is little hope after the explosion of a car bomb in a military school on 19 October 2006, attributed to the the FARC by the military authorities (Bolívar, 2006).

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<sup>30</sup> "Análisis noticioso: Por qué los ataques a Toribio", *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, 19 April 2005.

<sup>31</sup> "Colombia: El Presidente Uribe no debe ratificar la ley de impunidad", Press communiqué 13 July 2005, at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ESLAMR230212005>, accessed 8 May 2006.

<sup>32</sup> "Letter to President Alvaro Uribe", <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/09/06/colomb14132.htm>, accessed 2 October 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Uribe and his supporters are called *uribistas*.

## The Origins of the FARC

The communist guerrillas emerged as far back as 1949<sup>34</sup>, as peasant resistance against the official violence of the time. Self defence and organisation related to agrarian conflicts are old traditions in Colombia, involving the utilisation of both legal and illegal means. Both liberal and communist armed cores were formed in the south of the department of Tolima, and in 1950 a joint guerrilla conference was celebrated. The conference gave the groups under its direction the name of 'Revolutionary Army of National Liberation' (*Ejército Revolucionario de Liberación Nacional*) (Pizarro, 1989: 3-5; 10).

The origins of the armed movement of the FARC can likewise be found in the south of Tolima, in the municipality of Chaparral. (see appendix nr. 3). Here, agrarian conflicts were continuous when The Violence was initiated. The following communist self defence cores emerged in Chaparral from 1949 on: Chicalá, Horizontes, La Marina, and Irco. A self defence movement led by Isauro Yosa, or *Mayor Lister*<sup>35</sup>, was later turned into the first solid, mobile guerrilla group of communist influence (Pizarro, 1989: 5-10). Yosa, himself from Irco, Chaparral, and a group of peasants being displaced from their farms as a consequence of official violence, left these behind and arrived in what was to be called El Davis, in the municipality of Rioblanco. This was a guerrilla command, a concentration of communist guerrilla fighters (Matta<sup>36</sup>, 1999: 57-61).

Manuel Marulanda Vélez<sup>37</sup>, today's Commander in Chief of the FARC, and Jacobo Prias Alape, or *Charro Negro*; were liberal commanders at the time. They however joined in a march towards El Davis in which hundreds of families participated, running away from the army's attacks. Jaime Guaraca, who was later to become the second in command of the FARC, also participated in this march, still as a liberal. After arriving in El Davis, Manuel Marulanda Vélez and Jacobo Prias Alape decided to enter into the communist movement (Matta, 1999: 62-65).

The years 1949-1953 of the communist armed movement were to be characterised both by self defence and mobile guerrillas. The unity between communists and liberals was

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<sup>34</sup> It is important here to note that the contemporary guerrilla group of the FARC inherits very different dynamics and contain actors with different characteristics and life situations from those that gave the FARC its origins. The conditions given are of course not the same today as they were in 1949.

<sup>35</sup> This name was given him in order to honour the proletarian general Enrique Lister of the Spanish civil war (Matta, 1999: 57).

<sup>36</sup> All the information given by Matta comes from Jaime Guaraca's testimony (see this page, further below). Guaraca's testimony must of course be treated with care, but large parts of his account concerning the first guerrilla cores can be confirmed by others, such as Pizarro (1989).

<sup>37</sup> His real name is Pedro Antonio Marín. He took on the name of Marulanda as a tribute to a communist leader who was assassinated in 1951 ("Los alias, algo más que una simple 'chapa'", in *El País*, Cali, 9 Dec., 2005. <http://www.elpais.com.co>).

not to last long. The contradictions between the “limpios” and the “comuneros”<sup>38</sup> were to end up in an internal fight lasting for 22 months, with effects of wear and tear for both groups (Pizarro, 1989: 7; 11; Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 26).

One of the principal objectives of the government of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1953 was the demobilisation of the armed groups, offering a general and unconditional amnesty. Most of the communist guerrillas agreed to converting into self defence groups, but without demobilising and without handing in their arms (Pizarro, 1989: 13). According to Jaime Guaraca (Matta, 1998:79), only 30 men led by Manuel Marulanda and Jacobo Prias Alape continued as an active guerrilla group even in this period of self defence which was to last until 1954. That year, the Colombian Intelligence Service used assassins newly released from prison to kill self defence groups and peasants in the south of Tolima. The bipartisan violence and insurgency consequently regained their past years’ dynamics, and many Colombians came to see the amnesty as a ploy of the government (Sánchez, 1992: 102-9). Now, the Army was to bomb agrarian communist self defence areas of Villarica in the east of Tolima systematically from the air, employing also Napalm bombs. As a direct or indirect consequence of the military aggression, a hundred thousand people or more emigrated from the east of Tolima and the southwest of Cundinamarca. Organised and armed colonisers moved towards the rivers of Pato, Caguán, Ariari and Guayabero and towards the village of La Uribe in the department of Meta, where they created autonomous local authorities substituting the lacking state apparatus of the area (Pizarro, 1989: 19-20).

The strategies of resistance were redefined with the National Front in 1958. The PCC, having been illegalised during Rojas’ government, with the collapse of the latter declared itself legal and decided to support the presidential candidature of Liberal Alberto Lleras Camargo. The party thereby decided to work through legal channels which also involved the armed movement under its influence. Jacobo Prias Alape (*Charro Negro*) negotiated with the government on behalf of the communist guerrillas, which resulted in a peace agreement, but again without handing in their arms (Pizarro, 1989: 23-24). The guerrillas decided that from now on, they would be calling themselves an ‘agrarian movement’ and that a special commission would distribute land in the making of their own agrarian reform (Matta, 1999: 105).

A new period of self defence was initiated, and for more than two years, the agrarian communist movement was able to maintain a relatively stable situation in their areas of influence: Marquetalia, El Pato, Sumapaz, and Rio Chiquito. These were places of refuge for those who fled The Violence and the expropriation of their land. Manuel Marulanda Vélez

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<sup>38</sup> The liberals of no communist influence were popularly called “limpios”, meaning “clean”, whereas the communists were called “comuneros” or “liberales sucios”, meaning “dirty liberals” (Pizarro, 1989: 11).



was even appointed an official position that he occupied for almost two years (Pizarro, 1989: 25).

Things then started to turn complicated, as there was growing pressure against the agrarian movement of Marquetalia. According to Jaime Guaraca, Alberto Lleras Camargo's government started to make agreements with former liberal guerrillas in order to go against the revolutionary, agrarian movement and against Marquetalia. A plan designated to kill Jacobo Prias Alape succeeded on 11 January 1960 in the streets of Gaitania (Matta, 1999: 108-115). Pizarro (1989: 29) confirms that the *guerrilleros limpios* who killed him, led by Jesús María Oviedo ("Mariachi"), were permitted to do so both by civil and military authorities.

From 1961 onwards, Álvaro Gómez Hurtado presented fire-raising speeches in the Senate, claiming the existence of 16 "independent republics" escaping national sovereignty. The most important of these were Marquetalia<sup>39</sup>, Rio Chiquito, El Pato, Guayabero, Sumapaz, the region of Guariari and Vichada. This discourse started to affect Lleras Camargo's government, "inventing the enemy" within the context of the germinating Doctrine of National Security. In June 1961 the IX Congress of the PCC approved of the necessity of combining all means of struggle (Pizarro, 1989: 27-9).

In 1962, the government implemented a military action towards the region of Marquetalia which was stopped shortly thereafter without explanations. On 27 May 1964, another attack was however firmly initiated, giving birth to the FARC. The operation was put into effect under the name of "Plan LASO" (Latin American Security Operation) (Pizarro, 1989: 34). The FARC's narrative on Marquetalia stresses that a number of only 48 peasants were attacked by as many as 16 000 soldiers in the "largest military operation of encirclement and extermination known up to that time,"<sup>40</sup> advised and oriented by the U.S.A. This gives an impression resembling somehow that of David and Goliath, whereas the version of the Armed Forces presented by General Álvaro Valencia Tovar claims that only 1500 men were employed in the attack (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 26-28).

The further development of the FARC will be addressed in the next chapter, as I address its non-economic organisational resources. This will however be done in a way that follows the indicators of organisational effectiveness listed earlier, and hardly chronologically in time. The development of the FARC can however be characterised by the following phases: 1) partisan guerrilla (1966-1977), 2) guerrilla in expansion (1977-1983), 3) the truce of the Patriotic Union (1984-1987), the reestablishment-conquest of nomadism and autonomy towards the PCC (1987-1990), from Casa Verde towards a national offensive

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<sup>39</sup> The denominated "independent republic" of Marquetalia was located in the very south of the department of Tolima. See appendix nr. 3.

<sup>40</sup> "36 years for Peace and National Sovereignty", the FARC's webpage: <http://www.farcep.org>.

(1990-1993), and the intent to move towards a war of positions (1993-1998) (González, Bolívar and Vázquez, 2003: 54). I would add a last phase (1998- ongoing): Failed peace negotiations and a subsequent show-off of actual strength. The FARC seemingly wants to prove that it cannot be beaten militarily and that future negotiations will only be successful if the government agrees to a great part of their demands.

### CHAPTER III: ORGANISATIONAL RESOURCES AND EFFECTIVENESS

I will here through Clapham's indicators give an account of the degree to which the FARC enjoys the organisational resources that are necessary for effectiveness. Altogether they also give a synopsis of the FARC organisational apparatus and recent history that will be drawn upon in later chapters. The two last indicators concerning relationship to host societies are however not included here, as they will rather be accounted for in the next chapter.

#### **Educated Leaders and a Clearly Defined Political Project**

The first indicator concerns education and the extent to which the group renders a defined political project. According to Clapham (1998: 9), education is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for organisational effectiveness. For example, he notes that there has been no case in which uneducated leaders have been able to create disciplined movements with clearly defined political projects.

The political project of the FARC was defined and dispersed by members of the PPC. In several occasions just before the attack on Marquetalia the party's Central Committee sent support to the resistance through Jacobo Arenas and Hernando González (Matta, 1999: 142-43). Arenas was a member of the Central Executive Committee (*Comité Ejecutivo Central*) of the PCC, and later got a notable position as an ideologue within the leadership of the FARC. González was the leader of the Communist Youth Party (*la Juventud Comunista*) (Ferro and Uribe<sup>41</sup>, 2002: 32).

In April 1964 during a meeting which both attended, a Secretariat was appointed for the resistance, consisting of four members: Manuel Marulanda Vélez (*Tirofijo*), Isauro Yosa (*Lister*), Jacobo Arenas and Hernando González (Matta, 2001: 144-45). According to Commander Simón Trinidad, the core of the peasant resistance could now define what would be the development of the group: to expand itself throughout the country and search for unity between the guerrilla vanguard and the Colombian people (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 27).

The FARC however claims not to be the armed branch of the PPC; and that the PCC is not the political branch of the FARC. The group was not created by an external institution; legitimisation was always an internal matter (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 31-2). The FARC nevertheless received ideological guidance resulting in the adoption of Marxist-Leninist principles. Gutiérrez (2002: 13-14) doubts that the FARC has *always* been autonomous with respect to the PCC, and claims that this autonomy only came with the change of nature of the war- the emergence of drug trafficking and later the fall of the Soviet empire. Afterwards,

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<sup>41</sup> Ferro and Uribe's work is also built up around testimonies given by FARC members. In line with Guaraca's testimony, these must of course also be treated critically.

the FARC had to learn from other armed groups, such as the M-19. However, legitimization today certainly happens from within the FARC itself, which undoubtedly is an advantage. The organisation has taken a distance from the PCC, as the party does not agree with their armed struggle. According to the FARC, the PCC on its part has turned corrupt, too bureaucratic and caught up in electoral logic (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 144).

Among the seven members of the current Secretariat (*Secretariado*), four are professionals or have completed university studies, whereas three have a peasant origin (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 81). It seems that Alfonso Cano has replaced Jacobo Arenas<sup>42</sup> when it comes to ideological guidance, according to this quote<sup>43</sup> from an interview with Commander Fernando Caicedo (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 83): “For example they say comrade Alfonso was the one that replaced Jacobo on the ideological ground (...)”. Simón Trinidad<sup>44</sup> is another example of a high-profiled FARC commander and spokesman with a high level of education; he was a professor of economics at Jorge Tadeo Lozano University in Bogotá for ten years before he joined the FARC in 1994 (Leech, 2000: 24-5).

As to Commander in Chief Manuel Marulanda Vélez, he is most often referred to as a military genius than a well educated leader, as illustrated by his nickname “Sure Shot” (*Tirofijo*). He has a peasant origin, and is said to represent the peasant. He has neither been characterised as particularly eloquent, nor with a protruding capacity of fascinating his audience (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 32). Commander Fernando Caycedo formulates it as follows: “(...) he is not a man who has advanced in the academy, his academy has been the life in the mountains leading troops, leading peasants, leading the struggle. The truth of our comrade’s history lies in his acts” (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 109).

Despite his lack of education, Marulanda is described as having also a grand political capacity and moral authority. According to the testimonies of some of the commanders of the FARC, he is an ideologist even if he has not normally been portrayed like one in the media. He studies the situation in Colombia and of the world, and he proposes and develops ideas (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 109). This is confirmed by Álvaro Leyva<sup>45</sup>, who last visited Marulanda in December 2005. Then Marulanda was 77 years old: “He is totally updated as to what goes on in Colombia and in the world through the media. (...) He listens

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<sup>42</sup> Jacobo Arenas died in 1990, possibly when the government attacked the Secretariat at Casa Verde. Another version of his death can be found in Molano, 1994: 199-200.

<sup>43</sup> My translation. All of the following translations of testimonies will be my own.

<sup>44</sup> Simón Trinidad was extradited to the U.S.A. on December the 31<sup>st</sup> 2004, and is currently undergoing a trial, accused of drug trafficking and of the kidnapping of three American contractors in February 2003. The three Americans are still in the FARC’s control, and the Secretariat says it will not release them until Trinidad and other captured *guerrilleros* are released. Trinidad’s real name is Ricardo Palmera. *El Tiempo*, 28 Feb., 2005 and 29 Jan., 2006.

<sup>45</sup> Álvaro Leyva is a conservative ex-minister who has met Marulanda a number of times, the first was in 1983. The context of his visit was a peace proposal that he is working on, which he calls “Noah’s Ark. “Tres días con Tirofijo”, magazine *Semana*, 28 February 2006. <http://www.semana.com>.

continuously to the radio and he tries to prioritise the tv news”. He also “skilfully writes on his laptop”.

Marulanda is moreover the oldest *guerrillero* in the world, and in 1998 he was appointed the title of “man of the year” by the magazine *Semana* for his capacity of influence on national life. The magazine explains that the title is not always given to people who are seen as good examples, and that for the first time they chose a person from outside the law (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 108-9).

The political project of the FARC has gone through stages. After the attack on Marquetalia on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1964, a basic document was developed: “The Agrarian Program”. This document according to Commander Simón Trinidad contains a synthesis of what happened to this group of peasants, and of their main objectives: a political solution, that they be listened to, and that their problems be solved (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 27-28). By the Second Conference in 1966, the FARC had developed a new, higher objective in which the Agrarian Program was only a part: to take over state power and to transform state structures. The group was now no longer to speak only of agrarian demands, but of social demands that would include all Colombians (Ferro and Uribe: 2002: 36-7). Importantly, this was the conference in which the organisation was organised under the name of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-FARC*). Some sources therefore tell us that the organisation was founded in 1966, whereas the FARC itself<sup>46</sup> uses the day of the attack on Marquetalia in 1964 as the date of its foundation. Further details on the political project of the FARC will be accounted for below as I address the development of the group generally.

The FARC no longer operates only in rural areas, which according to FARC member Julián Garcés can be seen as connected to the fact that 70 % of the Colombian population now live in urban centres. The FARC consequently also has had to direct its perspectives towards the cities, where the greatest part of Colombians actually reside. There is now also a growing tendency of recruitment of people from the cities that have higher levels of education (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 63-5).

The FARC moreover claims to be a political-military organisation, meaning that all members should have both political and military skills. There is no such thing as a separate political or military section within the organisation (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 49). Political skills are however not always easy to inculcate considering the low level of education among many of the combatants. The expression “The FARC is a military giant and a political dwarf”, although an exaggeration, illustrates the problem. It is difficult to be a warrior and implement the work of a social organisation at the same time. The FARC in the past few

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<sup>46</sup> “Our History”, the FARC’s web page.

years has tried to fill this vacuum with the foundation of two clandestine movements under their direct direction: the Colombian Clandestine Communist Party (*el Partido Comunista Colombiano Clandestino- PCCC*) and The Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia (*Movimiento Bolivariano por una Nueva Colombia*) (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 146-8).

### **Development of the Group and Dispensability of the Leader**

Clapham (1998: 9) further claims that the ultimate indicator of organisational effectiveness is the way in which organisations develop or decay over time. Moreover, the decisive test of leadership is dispensability; the capacity of keeping the organisation together even if the leader should die or disappear.

The First Conference of the FARC was arranged the year of the attack on Marquetalia, and the guerrilla group was given the name of the *Southern Bloc (Bloque Sur)*. The Southern Bloc consisted of the following commands of resistance: Marquetalia, Rio Chiquito, 26 de Septiembre, Pato and Guayabero (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 34). By the Fifth Conference in 1974, the FARC operated through four fronts, whereas in 1982, by the Seventh Conference, the group had created 24 fronts. The expansion continued even more rapidly, and in 2001, there were more than 60 fronts that covered areas nearly all over the Colombian territory. By 2004, the FARC had between eighteen and twenty thousand members (Gutiérrez, 2004: 264-5). At the same time, the FARC “remains united, fights well, and holds tight in difficult situations” (freely from Gutiérrez, 2004: 279<sup>47</sup>). The FARC has managed to go through huge changes while at the same time improving its relative economic and military strength.

The FARC also has a history of peace talks that have had their impact on the organisation. As we have seen, talks began during the presidency of Belisario Betancur (1982-1986), in the course of which the FARC was offered legalisation of its political activity. The idea was to convert the organisation’s military force into a political party, and as a result there was a ceasefire in 1984. The FARC then renounced kidnapping. The extermination of the Patriotic Union (UP), however, meant to the FARC a closure of the legal democratic window (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 116) and the opening of a totally different one: Under the umbrella of the Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Movement Coordinating Body<sup>48</sup> (*Coordinadora Guerrillera Simón Bolívar-CGSB*) the FARC could further extend its actions (Leal, 2004: 91, 104).

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<sup>47</sup> All translations from Spanish into English are my own when no other source of translation is mentioned.

<sup>48</sup> This translation was found on the internet pages of the Center for International Policy, <http://www.ciponline.org>

Later, Cesar Gaviria's decision to attack the headquarter of the Secretariat in Casa Verde in 1990 resulted in an immense expansion of the FARC in its military structure according to Commander Raúl Reyes (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 116-17). New, unsuccessful talks in Carácas, Venezuela in 1991 and in Tlaxcala, Mexico in 1992 did not help diminish this expansion (Pécaut, 2004: 85). Commander Fernando Caycedo explains that the military strategy decided upon at the Eighth Conference in 1993 was to be known as a 'war of movement', which meant to besiege, to hit, catch off guard and then leave (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 117).

The corruption scandal related to the electoral campaign of President Ernesto Samper in 1994 led to a political crisis and favoured further expansion of the conflict. Between 1995 and 1998, the FARC's military operations would involve hundreds of combatants, leaving traditional guerrilla tactics behind and leading the Army to suffer crushing defeats (Pécaut, 2004: 85).

The talks during the presidency of Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) left the FARC in total control of the demilitarised zone that was provided. After the rupture of the dialogues, the FARC has been sharpening its military confrontations (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 118). Since the start of the presidency of Álvaro Uribe, the organisation has been threatening and terrorising municipal authorities in order to jeopardise the governance of the country (Leal, 2004: 102). In spite of President Uribe's rough line and the government's Patriotic Plan, it is difficult to say if the FARC have grown any weaker. The organisation has adopted new strategies, taking advantage of the fact that it is impossible for the militaries to be physically present in all of the huge Colombian jungle areas.

The FARC's development and history, especially the foundational event of Marquetalia, make up a substantial organisational resource. The repression that took place in the 1950s, the government attacks on Marquetalia, and also the fate of the Patriotic Union help the organisation legitimise and justify its actions. This point will be further addressed in chapter 5.

Manuel Marulanda Vélez is a leader who according to Commander Iván Ríos has a humble appearance, free of snobbishness. He does not like to create artificial images of himself through the media (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 110). Ferro and Uribe (2002:112) see this manner of projecting leadership as a weakness, in that there is a loss of efficiency in the transmission of messages to the Colombian people. As this might be true as to the popularity of the organisation among non-members, it is indeed a strength when it comes to organisational effectiveness; it contributes to the *dispensability of the leader*.

The type of leadership exercised by Marulanda has namely not created dependence towards him; he operates through the education of commanders and combatants within the internal dynamics of consultations and team work. Neither did Jacobo Arenas' death affect

the unity of the organisation (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 110-11). Commander Iván Ríos explains: “(...) the political course does not depend on one man; the political course depends on a collective which is the one that designs that political course; and that is called the ‘Conference’ (...) (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 111)”.

The Conservative politician Álvaro Leyva who visited the FARC’s Commander in Chief in December 2005 in order to discuss his peace proposal, was a witness to the way that Marulanda operates during consultations with the other members of the Secretariat. After the two had gone through Leyva’s proposal, Marulanda said he would like to hear the other six members’ comments to the peace formulas in question. In less than 24 hours all were able to give their written comments; which was impressive considering the geographical difficulties of the areas where several of the members of the Secretariat operate.

Summing up, the FARC has survived and adapted very well to changes, on which I will go more into detail below. At the same time the group has not depended only on the leader in the continuation of its political and military course.

### **Common Principles and Goals, Effective Structures**

Issues of personal leadership will be less critical when the members share a commitment to common principles and goals and receive formalised training on these (Clapham, 1998: 10). Where formal structures such as command councils, hierarchies, and military formations possess some autonomy of their own, there will be a higher degree of effectiveness.

The military organisms of the FARC are at the same time political, as mentioned above. Every military unit is thereby also called a political cell (*célula política*). According to Commander Fernando Caicedo, every cell has a political secretary and a secretary of propaganda, and all members of the cell meet every two weeks to make decisions democratically. The cell also dedicates an hour or half on the study of a text, such as the analysis of the last letter written by Marulanda to the President of Colombia. What’s more, they study what they call the Bolivarian<sup>49</sup> Cathedra (*Cátedra Bolivariana*) and other documents, their own magazine, and articles from their radio channels (Ferro and Uribe, 2002:43).

According to Commander Simón Trinidad, an especially important task is to equalise the political and the military skills so that the members have enough of both (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 83). Another difficulty lies in the equalising of knowledge and practical skills between combatants with rural and urban backgrounds. Those with urban backgrounds

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<sup>49</sup> ‘Bolivarian’ - originates in Simón Bolívar, who liberated Colombia from the Spanish. More information on the influence of Bolívar will be given below.



must learn to walk in the mountains, to fell trees, etc, while the ones coming from rural areas must acquire academic and political knowledge. The low level of education among the combatants coming from rural areas can be a challenge which is not always overcome (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 84).

Another political decision-making organism consists of the general assemblies of fronts, who meet minimum once a year. Here disciplinary problems are resolved and the theses suggested by the Secretariat discussed. The principal task of the general assemblies is however to choose the delegates for the National Conference of the Guerrillas (*Conferencia Nacional de Guerrilleros*) (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 43). The Conference is the maximum authority of the FARC, and its delegates can be elected among all the members of the organisation. The conference should be held every four years, but because of security problems it is held when the conditions permit so. It is organised by the Secretariat, and it should define the political and military plans of the organisation and appoint the Central General Staff (*Estado Mayor Central- EMC*).

The Central General Staff has 25 members, and it is the superior organism of direction and commands. It appoints the Secretariat, adjusts the plans for the conference, takes financial decisions and appoints the commanders of the General Staff of *Fronts* and *Blocs*. Meetings take place whenever considered necessary (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 46).

A *front* consists of more than one column, which again comprises two or more companies<sup>50</sup>. The number of combatants is not fixed, as the front is organised by occupied land and not by number of combatants. The *General Staff of Front* comprises five commanders.

A *bloc* consists of five or more fronts and it coordinates and unifies the activity of fronts in a specific area in order to develop strategic plans. The *General Staff of Bloc* coordinates the military campaigns and the plans elaborated at the conferences in their respective areas of bloc, and they control the development of the specific plans of their fronts. The blocs are under the direction of the Central General Staff or its Secretariat. Moreover, there are two Joint Commands (*Comandos Conjuntos*), the Central and the Occidental, that coordinate the activities of the fronts in their corresponding areas. These function when all the conditions for a bloc to be created are not present. They have a coordinator instead of a commander and they depend directly on the Central General Staff or on its Secretariat (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 50-52)

The Secretariat comprises seven commanders. It is the maximum authority in between the general assemblies and it is in charge of putting the conference's directives into effect. Today it is integrated by: Manuel Marulanda Vélez, commander in chief; Alfonso

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<sup>50</sup> A company is made up of two guerrilla units and their commands, each consisting of 26 combatants. Hence, a company comprises 54 combatants.

Cano, Raúl Reyes, Iván Márquez, Jorge Briceño<sup>51</sup>, Timoleón Jiménez<sup>52</sup> and Efraín Guzmán. According to Commander Iván Ríos, the Secretariat has great authority and autonomy, but its members can be replaced by the Central General Staff in plenary in case of misbehaviour. Moreover, all the members of the Secretariat except for Marulanda are at the same time commanders of blocs. Thus, they are able to stay in touch with the processes of the FARC and to control these not by reasoning power alone (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 47-8). Even if the members are not at the same place, there are good mechanisms of communication between them, such as witnessed by Álvaro Leyva in the example above.

As we have seen, the commanders of blocs are mostly made up of members of the Secretariat. The commanders of fronts also have great responsibilities. According to Commander Fernando Caicedo, the responsibilities that are undertaken within the organisation are called *carteras*<sup>53</sup>. The *carteras* of a commander of front are far-reaching: finances, intelligence, communication, organisational plans, arms, logistics, health care, and propaganda in addition to being chief of personnel (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 49).

It can be concluded from the above that the FARC has a centralised command structure; its political-military units are indeed subject to decisions and control issued by the Secretariat. However, the commanders of fronts have extensive tasks and responsibilities, and thereby possess considerable autonomy of their own. Moreover, the regular meetings that take place within every unit of the organisation, as well as the general assemblies, give some evidence of a quite orderly organisation where every member has the chance to speak. The regular sessions of analyses and studies of doctrine contribute to the identification and indoctrination of common principles and goals.

Ferro and Uribe (2002: 52-4) argue, however, that the tasks and rhythms of war require a controlled space of study, reflection and discussion concerning the politics of the organisation more often than in a state democracy. The democratic institution of the Conference loses influence because it cannot be organised often enough. The decisions are thereby taken by the Secretariat, perhaps reducing the possibilities of satisfying the expectations from within the organisation.

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<sup>51</sup> Jorge Briceño's nick name is 'Mono Jojoy'.

<sup>52</sup> Timoleón Jiménez' real name is Rodrigo Londoño-Echeverry. He also has an other nick name; 'Timochenko'.

<sup>53</sup> The literal meaning of *cartera* is 'bag' or 'wallet'. Here I would translate it with 'post' or 'task'.

## Ability to Stay United: Coherence and Level of Discipline

The ability to stay united in a rebel organisation is crucial. From the way that the FARC has developed over time, we have already seen that the FARC has stayed united and grown in number.

There are few accounts of serious splits, apart from a small number of people abandoning the organisation with a handful of dollars (Gutiérrez, 2004: 268). According to a report elaborated by the Joint Intelligence Committee of Colombia (*Junta de Inteligencia Conjunta*)<sup>54</sup> for year 2003, 1.24 % of the FARC's expenses stems from lost armaments given away by combatants who escape the organisation's ranks in order to join the Colombian Ministry of Defence's demobilisation program.

There is however one example of a particular split that is more salient than others: the creation of the guerrilla group "Ricardo Franco" by dissident FARC member Javier Delgado<sup>55</sup> at the beginning of the 1980s (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 58). While Delgado was still a member of the FARC, he was seen as very intelligent and competent and was entrusted the creation of urban groups. The first disagreements with the FARC came when he wanted to increase military attacks. He then accused the Communist Party of being responsible for the military inactivity of the FARC, and left the organisation bringing with him 1.200 million pesos and a number of combatants. The dissident group then tried to assassinate Hernando Hurtado from the Central Committee of the PCC, without luck.<sup>56</sup> What Delgado is most remembered for, however, is the massacre of Tacueyó in November 1985, in which 164 guerrillas from his own group were killed, allegedly for being infiltrators (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 58). He virtually exterminated his own guerrilla group and ran off to Panamá, but later returned to Colombia and was captured in Cali in 1995. In 2002 he was found dead in his prison cell, a death for which the FARC has claimed responsibility.<sup>57</sup>

The question is along which lines there was a split between the FARC and Delgado as well as the combatants he brought with him. Remembering Clapham's account of coherence, splits are good indicators of the lines on which an organisation is organised. It may be concluded from this case that it was a political split; there was a disagreement on whether the FARC should carry out more military activities. Delgado disagreed not only with the Secretariat, but also with the PCC. However, as this is the only known serious split within the FARC, it is difficult to draw any conclusions as to whether this implies that the

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<sup>54</sup> "Estimación de los ingresos y egresos de las FARC durante 2003 basados en información de inteligencia recolectada por las agencias del estado", Bogotá D. C. 24 February 2005, [http://usregsec.sdsu.edu/docs/Junta\\_de\\_InteligenciaFeb2005.pdf](http://usregsec.sdsu.edu/docs/Junta_de_InteligenciaFeb2005.pdf), accessed 14 September 2006.

<sup>55</sup> Javier Delgado's real name was José Fedor Rey Álvarez.

<sup>56</sup> "Obituario de José Fedor Rey, 'Javier Delgado'" in *El Mundo* 4 July 2002, <http://www.elmundo.es>

<sup>57</sup> "Colombia- Las FARC se atribuyen el asesinato del "monstruo de los Andes", ex rebelde disidente (...)", in Europa Press- Servicio Latinoamericano, 30 June 2002. <http://www.europapress.es>

FARC is organised on political lines more than on personal or other lines. The case of Javier Delgado is an extreme one, which can be illustrated by the following formulations by a journalist of *The Times*<sup>58</sup> in 1986:

It is a measure of paranoia that he claims pre-posterously that the 164 'little runts' executed were paid informers of the military who had infiltrated the ranks of the 'Francos', a group whose numbers have never exceeded 200. (...) Delgado stands alone. He has declared war not only on the government, the oligarchy and the armed forces, but also on FARC, the Communist Party and the left in general for 'betraying' the revolutionary cause.

According to Commander Fernando Caicedo, the problem was that the control over urban fronts is not as good as that over rural fronts. As we have seen, Javier Delgado was operating in urban areas where he was more difficult to reach. This incident marked off a milestone in the loss of legitimacy of the FARC and their ethical dimension among public opinion (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 59).

The FARC however have control mechanisms related to their level of discipline, combatants are not stimulated with material goods, and they receive no fixed salary. Commander Fernando Caicedo explains (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 59-60):

What has to do with material stimuli, that people are motivated because they dress better, because they eat better, because they have a more luxurious weapon, because they have access to more sophisticated means of work, now that can start to generate problems, deviations that do not correspond, well, really what is needed of people is an understanding of the fact that one does not suffer in order to suffer, that we are not a sect, nor monks, nor are we studying to be clergymen, but we do handle some resources which belong to the organisation and to all the people, because they are for the benefit of a very noble cause.

Similarly, a member of the FARC who in 1999 was responsible for implementing order in the Caguán area, says that in order to avoid bribe, his first decision was to prohibit any FARC members to wear valuable necklaces given to them as presents: "They give it to me and I give it to the Secretariat" (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 60-1).

According to Commander Iván Ríos, the combatants are stimulated morally. For example when someone has drawn notice to him- or herself as a good fighter, he or she will be put in front of the troop. Likewise, advancement in the organisation is a type of stimulus that is given when it is earned. Thus, the organisation hopes to slow down tendencies of social climbing (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 88-9). There are also stimuli such as: awards, belonging to strategic companies, participating in specialisation courses, etc. Moreover, members are kept well fed and in good condition (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 90-1). This all contributes to the group staying united. All in all, the FARC seems to inherit the requirement

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<sup>58</sup> Geoffrey Matthews: "Spectrum: Massacre in the Andes", 17 March 1986

of coherence to a considerable degree, with few exceptions. In order to further explore the level of coherence, I will now turn to the most important disciplinary practices of the FARC.

According to Rangel<sup>59</sup>, the FARC is a very integrated organisation with great internal consistency, in which verticality and discipline prevail. Defections are not tolerated and there are many coercive mechanisms at all levels of the organisation that help instruct political, military and organisational decisions made by the Secretariat. The fronts are very well controlled, and so are the finances.

The *Regulations of disciplinary regimen* of the FARC describe the different control mechanisms of the organisation. There is a political or military sanction for every type of offence or misdemeanour. According to Commander Fernando Caycedo, the offence is first taken up in the cell, then step by step up through the hierarchy until reaching the Secretariat. There is also a vertical disciplinary body within the FARC called the Relation (*La Relación*) which every day treats the offences that come up. In the Relation there is no democracy. Every morning there is also a meeting between the commanding units in order to balance the work of the day before and plan the next. If a decision will affect political life, it goes to the cell in order for the latter to give its opinion. An offence can then be sanctioned both militarily and politically (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 57-8).

It should also be said that the FARC demands life militancy; leaving the organisation is extremely difficult. Despite this fact, recruitment in its majority is voluntary, as FARC leaders state that forced recruits are dangerous because they can switch sides. The combat morale is moreover relatively high, and individual desertion has not been massive (Gutiérrez, 2004: 269-71)

As we have seen, Clapham (1998: 11) mentions the level of discipline of child soldiers as a particularly good indicator of the level of discipline of the organisation as a whole. These children often come from traumatic backgrounds, but to some degree they will behave according to the different organisational ethos of different insurgencies, as exemplified by the behaviour of child soldiers in for instance Ethiopia and Sierra Leone. In Ethiopia they acted with a level of discipline beyond that of the regular armed forces, whereas in Sierra Leone they were responsible for horrible atrocities.

Human Rights Watch has made a report<sup>60</sup> about child soldiers in Colombia's irregular armed groups, the FARC included. According to the report, the children's accounts reinforce the impression of the FARC as a highly vertical, organised and disciplined military force. The abuses committed by the guerrillas are therefore unlikely to be the product of

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<sup>59</sup> Alfredo Rangel Suárez, Director of the Foundation of Security and Democracy (*La Fundación Seguridad y Democracia*), <http://www.seguridadydemocracia.org>, Bogotá, Colombia. Personal correspondence.

<sup>60</sup> "You'll Learn Not To Cry". Child Combatants in Colombia. Human Rights Watch, September 2003, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/colombia0903/>. Accessed 2 October 2006.

misconduct, but rather the result of specific orders that have been carried out. The report describes how the FARC holds “war councils” in order to punish capital offences<sup>61</sup>. These are in fact more like summary executions dressed up as judicial procedures, making up abhorrent violations of international humanitarian law. When the war council has passed a sentence, a review mechanism such as that described by Commander Caycedo is carried out: the company commander communicates the decision to his or her superior officers, then the superiors order the sentence to be authorised or not. This indicates that executions are mostly authorised by top commanders. Then the execution can proceed, and a few members of the company are picked out to complete it. Apart from executions, there are other types of punishment such as being chained to trees for weeks, digging garbage pits, trenches, or latrines for days on end, carrying piles of wood, etc.

It speaks for itself that the descriptions made by HRW are absent in the accounts made by FARC commanders in Ferro and Uribe’s work. Apart from the fact that the FARC punishes its own combatants, Ferro and Uribe report of “revolutionary justice” being applied to innocent civilians several times during their field work, and even people they knew were executed between 1997 and 2001. It is hard to establish whether orders from the highest level of the hierarchy or orders coming from an intermediate level of direction are the ones that result in the application of “revolutionary justice” to innocent people. It is nevertheless important to remember that FARC leaders will try to make their testimonies fit the overall narratives and identity of the organisation, and therefore, their statements cannot always be trusted. If the leadership of the organisation makes a mistake, it is always easy to blame the intermediate levels of the organisation, as this will be less damaging to the organisation as a whole. It is easier to accept members in the lower ranks of an organisation as “only human beings” (human beings make mistakes) than those in the higher ones. According to Aguilera (2003: 12), the reverence for Marulanda and his slow conversion into a legend has made the possibility of identifying his mistakes increasingly difficult. Member of the Secretariat Alfonso Cano has stated that Marulanda, on the other hand, never forgets the mistakes of others; something that Cano considers a quality rather than a defect. The general conclusion concerning level of discipline within the FARC is that the organisational ethos of the organisation does not permit undisciplined behaviour, and that punishment in case of misconduct is severe.

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<sup>61</sup> The most serious infractions of the FARC’s military code are, according to the HRW report: falling asleep while on guard duty, trying to run away or being absent without leave, surrender, loss of a weapon, being an informer or infiltrator, using a weapon against a fellow combatant, firing guns in populated areas, robbery, extortion, or violence against the civilian population, repeated drug or alcohol abuse, and rape. These ‘capital offences’ are punishable by execution without regards to the offender’s age.

## CHAPTER IV: THE FARC'S WAR ECONOMY AS SOCIAL INTERACTION

This chapter will show how economic resources are important to the overall functioning of the FARC, while at the same time these cannot alone account for the onset of conflict, nor the creation, recruitment and effectiveness of this particular insurgent group. The FARC's most important war economic activities will be accounted for in this chapter, but these will rather be seen as social interaction within a social order of violence beyond the state that comes close to a quasi-state system (Bakonyi and Stuvøy, 2005: 359). Knowledge about the organisational functioning of the FARC will give evidence that Collier and Hoeffler's accounts of opportunity and greed are overly simplistic. I will treat the illegal resource of coca especially, in order to recount the complex social interaction that takes place within such an important part of the FARC's war economy. At the end of the chapter I will see the FARC's economic activities in relationship to the requirements of a quasi-state system.

### The FARC's System of Economic Reproduction

Rangel, following Naylor (1993: 13-51), summarises the FARC's means of obtaining resources as *predatory*, *parasitic* and *symbiotic* (Rangel, 1999: 29). These categories are determined by the relationship to host societies, by the respective regional economy, as well as the state's capacity of control in the area of relevance. The *predatory* type of financing is accordingly seen in areas where the FARC has no influence over its host society and its own presence is sporadic and occasional, making it vulnerable to the coercive state apparatus. Ways of subtraction are assaults, cattle theft, kidnapping and extortion. The *parasitic* type requires more of a long term infiltration into formal society and some active and passive support from within it. The coercion produced by such a long term armed presence makes it possible to demand payment for services of vigilance, to extort public officials and contractors, etc. The *symbiotic* type of financing is the most advanced of the three and happens where the state's presence is weak or non-existent; in territories where the FARC has almost total control. Part of the FARC's success and deep-seatedness has to do with the fact that it has been a constructor of territories in areas of low population density, filling up the territorial deficit that the state still does not take appropriation of. The guerrilla group in these areas can carry out its own economic activities related to drug trafficking, mining (gold, emeralds, etc.), agriculture, stockbreeding, and the collection of revolutionary taxes. (Rangel, 2001: 384-389; 1999: 29-31).

The FARC has managed to adapt successfully to structural changes within the Colombian economy, to create ties with international markets; to maintain an efficient and

stable war economy while at the same time extracting resources in convenient proportions on the basis of rational calculations. Moreover, a high percentage of the resources is not spent immediately, but is rather invested in various ways into the formal economy, both at the local, national, and international levels (Rangel, 2001:389-90; 1999: 31).

The most important of the FARC's economic activities are kidnapping, extortion, and income deriving from the drug business. According to the Joint Intelligence Committee of Colombia (*Junta de Inteligencia Conjunta*)<sup>62</sup>, the marketing of cocaine hydrochloride in year 2003 represented 45.49 % of the FARC's total income, whereas extortion made up 41.31 %, kidnapping 6.75 %, investment output 3.04 %, and cattle theft 1.39 %. To give us an idea, the estimated maximum income from cocaine hydrochloride for 2003 according to the report was approximately 1 700 billion pesos or 600 million dollars. I will here have a short look at the three most important activities: drug trafficking, extortion, and kidnapping.

*Drug trafficking:* the FARC is not a drug cartel in a strict sense, but has rather established a tax system covering every phase of the industry in an archetypical case of symbiosis between the insurgents and the regional economy. Supplies have to go through control posts, and there are fixed taxes for each ton or gallon of cement, gasoline, sulphuric acid, and other raw materials. Cultivators of coca who have more than four hectares of land pay according to the extension of their crops, whereas processors pay according to the weight of the coca paste or cocaine. This tax is known as *gramaje*<sup>63</sup>, but there are also taxes for taking the merchandise out of the area, be it by plane, boat or by road, and for using runways and landing strips (Rangel, 2001: 401-3).

According to Ferro and Uribe (2002: 98), the FARC has however gone from collecting taxes to turning into merchants in the lower area of the river Caguán (see appendix nr. 3). This means that the guerrilla group buys from the producers of basic paste and sells to bigger merchants. This practice has been further extended to the whole department of Caquetá, although it is not something the organisation likes to admit. Local drug traffickers probably sell to someone bigger and more powerful who again finances paramilitary groups in other regions (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 98). It seems like the FARC is indeed following the mercantile logics of selling to anyone in order to obtain the resources to keep the war going. In August 2005, the Colombian Army according to the newspaper *El Tiempo*<sup>64</sup> discovered 3.8 tons of cocaine in a wine cellar in Bogotá stamped with a Farian symbol. A stamp of a

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<sup>62</sup> "Estimación de los ingresos y egresos de las FARC durante 2003 basados en información de inteligencia recolectada por las agencias del estado", Bogotá D. C. 24 February 2005, [http://usregsec.sdsu.edu/docs/Junta\\_de\\_InteligenciaFeb2005.pdf](http://usregsec.sdsu.edu/docs/Junta_de_InteligenciaFeb2005.pdf), accessed 14 September 2006.

<sup>63</sup> *Gramaje* literally means weight (in grams).

<sup>64</sup> "Las Farc también tenían su tajada en la carga de coca incautada por las autoridades en Bogotá", 3 September 2005.



sun simulating a sunset in the *llanos*<sup>65</sup> confirms the sale of cocaine to a faction of a drug cartel from the north of Valle which again has another ally, namely the paramilitaries of Casanare. According to Rangel (2001: 403), however, such functional alliances are purely temporary and localised, while the enmity between the FARC and the paramilitaries is long term and of extreme hostility.

*Extortion:* This means of obtaining resources is first and foremost parasitic on the formal economy. Sometimes extortion is also the prior step towards kidnapping, if the victim refuses to pay what he or she is asked. The majority nonetheless give up in view of the guerrilla's pressure, paying a fixed annual amount or a variable amount depending on sales and production. This again gives the FARC a chance to plan for the flow of resources that it will receive over a year. The extortion of the ranching and agricultural sector is known as *vacuna*<sup>66</sup>, and it depends on the patrimony, size, and productivity of the land as well as the owner's degree of cooperation with local fronts. The FARC will protect the property against cattle theft, land invaders, and other extortionists and thieves (Rangel, 2001: 396-400).

Other sectors are also extorted, to mention but a few the mining industries and the transportation sector. In areas where the FARC enjoys tight control, there is no passenger transportation company that does not pay extortion. The public sector is neither exempt from it, as one of the political strategies of the FARC is to take control over municipal local power. Hence, the guerrilla decides where public money goes, and to which companies contracts are handed out (Rangel, 2001: 398-400).

*Kidnapping:* This is the principal form of predatory action against the Colombian formal economy. About half of the kidnappings occurring in the world today are carried out in Colombia, and about half of these are executed by guerrilla groups (principally the FARC and the ELN). Potential victims are no longer just wealthy people; nowadays any person from the middle class is in possible danger. Kidnapping has become almost an industrial process, and the guerrillas have experts for every phase of it. They also have highly advanced communication equipment, which is used in order to access privileged information from official entities and thereby construct very complete data bases used to carry out both individual and collective kidnappings. Collective kidnappings are known in the Colombian news media as *pescas milagrosas*, meaning "miraculous fishing". During the latter, hundreds of cars are stopped on the road, and the guerrillas with the help of portable computers use its data bases to select its victims one by one. In urban areas kidnappings are often executed by criminal gangs subcontracted by the guerrilla who later deliver the victim. The average ransom for Colombian victims is around a hundred thousand dollars, whereas for foreigners

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<sup>65</sup> *Llanos* means level country; plains.

<sup>66</sup> *Vacuna* literally means vaccine, vaccination.

it is sometimes fifteen times higher. On average, every fifth victim is a foreigner (Rangel, 2001: 392-395).

The FARC's expenditure is mostly represented by chemical consumables used in the processing of narcotics<sup>67</sup>, the purchase and maintenance of military equipment, team provisions, food provision, logistics sustenance and infrastructure. It is presumed that the FARC is moreover constructing its own military industry by way of establishing workshops in which cartridges and mortar shells are to be produced and rifles to be repaired. Part of its spending is also destined towards a system of social security, in order to give retired guerrillas a pension or economic support to their families, and to be able to treat those who have been wounded in combat (Rangel, 2001, 403-4). FARC combatants however do not receive a fixed salary (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 90).

The economic resources acquired by the FARC, including personal gifts, are considered collective property. Plans for the administration of resources are elaborated by the National Conference of the Guerrillas, and their implementation is the responsibility of the Central General Staff, its Secretariat, as well as the general staff of blocs and fronts. From 1985 on, the FARC's finances were centralised, and particular budgets were to be devised for each bloc, front, and commission, with strict bureaucratic control over those handling the finances. This has avoided economic differences between fronts, whereas before this centralisation some fronts in areas of high income would enjoy better quality of life (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 103-6).

### **Economic Activities as Social Interaction**

The FARC's flow of resources has political advantages. According to Rangel (1999: 97), the FARC is not willing to respect international humanitarian law because such a compromise would abruptly undermine the flow of resources necessary for its political activity and military expansion. The political cost would be so high that it seems difficult for the guerrilla group to pay that price. Rangel thus makes it clear that economy plays a vital role in the political project of this guerrilla group; that economy and politics are closely intertwined. Knowing that the control over resources is extremely tight, an emphasis on individual economic gains such as presented by Collier and Hoeffler is not feasible.

Symbolic aspects, which are also overlooked in the quantitative approach of economic agendas, are extremely important in the FARC's centralised administration of resources in that it is actually related to the "revolutionary mysticism" (Ferro and Uribe,

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<sup>67</sup> According to the Joint Intelligence Committee's report referred to earlier, this category represents as much as 38.55 % of the FARC's total expenditure.

2002:105). Whenever this administration is managed in a way that promotes the criteria of equity, solidarity, transparency and efficiency, it is coherent with the organisation's design of an economic model for the country as a whole and hence it reinforces the organisational mysticism. The FARC's members then feel that they are living according to the organisation's principles and socioeconomic objectives (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 105-108).

This interdependent web of social interaction across political, economic and symbolic spheres is what Bakonyi and Stuvøy (2005: 364) conceptualise as a social order of violence beyond the state. The basis of the FARC's organisational effectiveness is indeed founded upon all three spheres, as was shown in the former chapter. These aspects do affect one another, such that for instance more concern with economic resources may have weakened the concern for the civilian population. What Collier and Hoeffler fail to explain is however why FARC members risk their lives, give up their families, stay united; why so few run away with the organisation's money and why they agree to join the organisation in the first place, considering the fact that they receive no salary and that they are not allowed to take booty after an attack (Gutiérrez, 2004: 269). They fail to do this because their quantitative approach loses out on the role of social constraints, principles, norms, rules and a sense of a collective identity; on how these actually affect economic activities.

Without organisational resource of having a clearly defined political project, established principles and organisational structures, as well as a proven ability to stay united, the FARC would not be able to carry out effective actions of war. It would neither be able to increase its economic resources in such a stable manner as it does today. However, the organisational effectiveness would also not be possible at the same scale without access to economic resources. Importantly, economic reproduction is implemented in such a way that it actually reinforces the combatants' sense of belonging to a strong political cause. The money that not necessarily has to be spent, is invested in order to reach long-term political goals. An abundance of resources is therefore not an obstacle for internal cohesion within this particular guerrilla group. This is very interesting when taking some influential research findings into account. The International Peace Academy in their 2004 report of economic agendas in civil wars (Ballentine, 2004) claimed that "the more that state and non-state combatants depend on the predatory exploitation of natural resources and other wealth, the more susceptible they become to corrosion of internal coherence and discipline (...)". Although predatory ways of obtaining resources, such as kidnapping, have awakened considerable repulsion among large parts of the civilian population<sup>68</sup>, corrosion seemingly is not the case when it comes to the internal coherence of the FARC. This fact further proves

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<sup>68</sup> A quite recent investigation carried out by the Institute of Political Studies and International Relations at the *Universidad Nacional* in Bogotá, concludes that Colombians "confide very little in the guerrillas" (*El Tiempo*, 24 September, 2005).

the necessity of looking into the factors that promote organisational effectiveness, in order to comprehend the complex dynamics of non-state armed actors.

### **The Coca Economy and the *Cocalero Campesinos***

“When armed actors direct the exploitation of a legal or illegal crop, they are also participating in politics; they are putting together social groups and building forms of identity” (Bolívar, 2003: 26).

The Colombian *cocalero campesinos*<sup>69</sup> who are under the control of the FARC belong to such a social group, but the forms of identification with the FARC are varied. I will employ two of Clapham’s indicators that I previously left out in order to illustrate this complex social interaction, namely 1) relationship of common interest and 2) whether the members of the guerrilla group live together with its host society on a daily basis, living and eating like the peasantry, and whether they are “bombed together”.

The FARC controls large areas of the Colombian territory over which the State has been incapable of extending its authority. In some of the regions where coca is grown today, such as Putumayo, Caquetá and Guaviare (see appendix 1), there has been no state control beyond a small police force in the municipal urban centres. Coca producers from these regions claim that the only authority they ever knew, prior to the introduction of coca, was that of the guerrillas. The FARC in the early 1970s filled the vacuum in these areas, which became the guerrillas’ strongholds (Richani, 2003: 20). Where people are accustomed to FARC rules, it can indeed be hard for the regular armed forces to gain support. In Cartagena del Chairá, a village in Caquetá of some 8000 people (see appendix 4), a peasant remarked the following when an army soldier tried to explain that the Army and the guerrillas were two very different things: “You know what? Here everybody has grown up with the idea of the authority of the guerrillas. Another generation that recognises the authority of the Army has yet to come”<sup>70</sup>.

The relationship between the FARC and its host societies in these areas is however a complex one. The involvement in the drug economy has created strong contradictions: on the one hand it has created problems of insecurity in the area, on the other, the *cocalero campesinos* have a viable means of income in areas where infrastructure is scarce and unemployment is high.

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<sup>69</sup> Ramírez (2005: 76) defines the term ‘cocalero campesinos’ as referring to the identity of small peasants (cultivating up to three hectares of coca) who have been fighting to be differentiated as a social group.

<sup>70</sup> Article by Pilar Lozano: “Cinco años para derrotar a las FARC”, *El País*, Madrid, 28 July, 2005. <http://www.elpais.com>.

Peasants in the Caguán area of Caquetá (see appendix 4) started growing coca in the 1970s, when a considerable colonisation of the area had already taken place. The FARC established a stable presence in the area at the end of the same decade (Jaramillo, 1989: 56), and was faced with the dilemma of either banning coca or accepting it. According to Manuel Ruíz in Cartagena del Chairá, this coincided with great poverty that had been provoked by the drought of 1979, which along with the absence of the state made up an adequate economic and natural context for illicit cultivation to take place (Ferro, 2004: 414-16).

At the beginning this created a quite chaotic situation, and the FARC entered one of its most critical periods when the newly established self defence forces were involved in a number of abuses. As a consequence, the forces were closed down and the organisation instead started to take direct control over the coca economy through taxations and market regulations (Ferro, 2004: 417-19). Security was improved, as the FARC assumed the roles of the police and the judiciary. A minimum wage for coca leaf pickers and minimum prices for the leaf which middlemen must pay was also established. The public furthermore became subject to community rules concerning liquor sales, drug use, hours of operation for businesses, hunting and fishing, and staple crops on coca farms (Rangel, 2000: 587). The FARC has also organised services of education, health, road construction, and loans to farmers and small businessmen (Chernick, 2000: 37).

According to a colonist from the Caguán area (Ferro, 2004: 423-4), after 1986 the FARC however started becoming more and more careless as to what concerned the community, as the organisation concentrated more effort on the military and on economic factors. As said by another colonist (Ferro, 2004: 424): when the organised community asked for more involvement, this was not taken into account, and the FARC limited itself to charge taxes; to the economic management. There have also been atrocities committed towards civilians, such as the massacre of seven members of the indigenous Coreguages of the San Luís community in July 1997, as reported by Ferro and Uribe (2002: 61).

In 1996 an issue of common interest between the FARC and its host societies in the Southern Bloc however led to the mobilisation of thousands of *cocalero campesinos* in the *cocalero* marches (*marchas cocaleras*). In Putumayo there has not been an integral and structured process of development. There is a lack of infrastructure and technical assistance, and access to markets is difficult. Also because of fumigations of coca fields in Guaviare and Caquetá, there has been an increase in the growing of coca in Putumayo. Peasants have little other choice than to grow coca, but they are aware of the problems of this economy. Indeed, they have been asking the government since the end of the 1980s that they be recognised as citizens and heard as valid interlocutors, and that their propositions for an alternative licit economy involving an integral development and gradual substitution of crops be taken into consideration. Instead, the government has been answering with militarisation and aerial

fumigations (Betancourt, 2004: 2; Ramírez, p. 3). This again has caused further destabilisation of the area, leading to a growing number of internal refugees<sup>71</sup>.

In 1996, in the course of three months, 200 000 peasants were mobilised in the *cocalero* marches, during which the issue of the *cocalero campesinos* was eventually put on the political agenda. The peasants could finally negotiate with the central government and the “Pacts of Orito” were signed. For several reasons these pacts, involving alternative development plans for the region, were however never properly fulfilled. There was a lacking governmental commitment, Plan Colombia was implemented, and paramilitary attacks also constituted a serious obstacle (Betancourt, 2004: 3). There is therefore reason to believe that recruitment to the guerrillas grew in the aftermath, according to Ferro (2004: 428).

Conversely, in September 2000, the FARC declared an armed strike (*paro armado*) in Putumayo which was not related to popular needs or demands. During such strikes the guerrillas occupy the roads and prohibit traffic into and out of town centres. This was only a month before the elections to select mayors, governors, municipal councillors, and department deputies, and the FARC’s demands were for the State to reject Plan Colombia<sup>72</sup> and to cut back the paramilitary groups in the south. The strike lasted for so long that it led to a general rejection of the FARC among the civilian population, to the point that it was lifted in the middle of December 2000, although the government had not met any of the demands (Ramírez, p. 9).

As I have shown, the relationship between the FARC and its host societies in the Southern Bloc is one of common interest in some contexts, but not in others. As acknowledged by Ramírez (2005: 76), the authority of the FARC is at once accepted and resisted. According to González, Bolívar and Vásquez (2003: 57), the colonisers and peasants of these regions want to be incorporated into the market and into the State, while not necessarily identifying with the political, social and economic project of the FARC. Indeed, the FARC does not accept autonomous social or political movements outside its own, and the concept of civil society is rejected whenever it includes a relationship to the State (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 129-31). An example of this has been the prohibition of any peasant organisation capable of challenging their authority (Ramírez, p. 8).

FARC combatants however live according to the same socioeconomic principles that the organisation is proposing for the rest of society. They also eat of the food that peasants can supply them with, such as bananas, yucca, corn and peas (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 90;

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<sup>71</sup> See Norwegian Refugee Council: “Flyktning 2001 Amerika”.

<sup>72</sup> Plan Colombia was approved by U.S. Congress in June 2000, and was presented as a peace plan. 70 % of its economic aid was however to be spent on military equipment and training for counter-insurgency and the eradication of coca. It implied widespread aerial sprayings of coca fields. See Norwegian Refugee Council, <http://www.nrc.no>.

105-8). The symbiotic economic relationship in the coca growing areas, with all its contradictions and complexities, shows us particularly well how this is not a strictly economic relationship. The *cocalero campesinos*, living closely with the guerrillas on an everyday basis are not criminalised but accepted by the FARC as legitimate members of the community, while at the same time they are silenced whenever they have political ideas different from those of the guerrillas. However, as the FARC is the authority they know the best, and whom they have depended on, a coca substitution program would certainly need the guerrilla group's participation. This is a typical example of how peace efforts must take into account the various forms of social interaction that take place both within the FARC's war system as well as between the latter and civilians. The greed thesis overlooks all of these very important aspects, and any peace effort based on it can therefore not be of real use, as it might even hurt the civilian population the most<sup>73</sup>.

The FARC's control over specific territories and the consequent symbiotic type of financing, its relative support in these areas and its provision of security and welfare-services are all indicators of the FARC inheriting a high degree of institutionalisation of authority. The bureaucratic control over resources as well as its rational spending of these add up to the latter. The forms of economic activities are indeed related to sustainability concerns rather than individual winning or immediate relief. It is also true that robbery does not represent a prime economic activity, as looting is banned within the organisation. However, abductions or kidnappings make up a considerable part of the FARC's economic activities. Generally, the use of violence is widespread. Although not supported by the majority of the Colombian population, the FARC still has potential for recruitment in the coca growing areas, probably because of the non-engagement of the state in the area. Moreover, the FARC's flow of resources continues, making it more independent on its host societies' support. As long as its internal legitimacy is strong, more support from the civilian population does not seem to be required for the organisation to continue as today.

A final aspect that needs to be explored is how the organisational resources and economic strength of the FARC affect internal legitimacy. In the next chapter I will therefore address the foundations of the FARC's internal legitimacy as well as its categorisation into Weber's typology of domination.

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<sup>73</sup> I am here referring to specific efforts that have been made so far, such as trying to take away the FARC's economic basis by way of fumigation. This hurts poor *cocaleros* and the environment the most, for the FARC has certainly not become any weaker economically as a result of it.

## CHAPTER V: LEGITIMATION AND LEGITIMACY

In this chapter I will address the sustenance of a Farian identity through the perspective of self-legitimation (Barker), as well as establish the grounds that the FARC's legitimacy is based on (Weber). In the first part, I will observe the FARC's archetypical self-legitimisations and narratives about the enemy, as well as the secrecy and contradictions that are found within both. In the second part, I will employ my findings from the present and former chapters with the purpose of discovering the bases of the FARC's internal legitimacy. I will do so by way of looking into the organisational resources, type of administration, and the way the latter is financed. This will give indications of the FARC's type of domination. At the end of the chapter, I will compare the insights offered by Weber's ideal categories with those produced by the indicators of legitimation offered by Barker.

### Self-legitimizing Narratives

The conviction of their own authority is intense in the identity of rebels. A select group among them is by definition marked off by piety, courage, insight or dedication, characterised in a way that stresses their exceptional nature (Barker, 2001: 92-94). The rhetorics of the FARC's existence and of its so-called Farian culture (*cultura fariana*) first and foremost build upon its memory-narratives. The foundational event of the attack on Marquetalia is the basis upon which the leadership has elaborated the heroic memory of its struggles (Pécaut, 2004: 78)<sup>74</sup>.

Jaime Guaraca<sup>75</sup>, recounting the origins of the peasant zones in which the first guerrilla groups originated, recounts that the peasants there were "hard working" and "united"; that they fought for their land "peacefully", while at the same time in possession of a heritage of "despise for the oppressor". The department of Tolima (see appendix 1) used to be populated by the indigenous tribes of Pijaos and Paeces, whose historical tradition according to Guaraca was of war and defence. In Guaraca's words, the struggle between the Pijaos and the Spanish armies had reflected guerrilla warfare. Moreover, most people in Tolima are descendents of the Pijaos, and there is little mixture between indigenous and white because of the way the Pijaos "recklessly" fought the Spanish (Matta, 1999: 27-33).

Guaraca is thus creating or confirming a narrative myth of the first people who joined the guerrillas; a myth related to the region they came from (Tolima and its

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<sup>74</sup> Such memories are of course coloured by the different layers of time and events that have passed later in time. The purpose here is however not to discuss whether such a collective narrative based on memories is based on the 'truth', but to show how the FARC legitimates itself.

<sup>75</sup> It is worth noting here that Jaime Guaraca has been a member of the FARC since its very origins and was the second in command of the Secretariat until the beginning of the 1990s.



surroundings) and their ancestors (the Pijaos). The narrative of resisting the 'Operation Marquetalia' must therefore be seen in relationship to this myth; the 48 people attacked by the 16 000 soldiers supported by the U.S.A within FARC narrative are not seen as 'normal' people like you and me, but had a natural propensity in their blood for fighting and resisting the 'oppressor'. The several accounts in Colombian newspapers of Marulanda's death after the attack on Marquetalia in 1964 (Alape, 2000: 19-23), and later proofs of his survival, have only strengthened this storyline. The event of the attack on Marquetalia has thus produced a discourse much based upon the immortality and heroism of the members of the organisation who survived it, and of the unstoppable nature of the organisation as a whole. It is all presented as if the 'just cause' of the FARC assured its survival and that it will continue to do so in the transition towards a 'perfect society' as depicted by Marxist thought. This belief is further confirmed within the group by such facts as the size of the organisation and the status as a political actor during the peace talks with former President Pastrana.

The Farian development as presented by its leaders further brings me to accounts of particular heroes which, as claimed earlier, fill the language of rebellion. The case of the FARC is no exception, and its self-legitimizing accounts have gone through stages as a result of changes on the international arena, of the changing dynamics of the conflict as such, as well as the search for recognition as a political actor (Aguilera, 2003: 4). These accounts at their core level contain worship for the family of *revolutionary prophets*, such as Marx, Lenin and Engels, but later also the figure of Che Guevara. After his death in 1967, Che Guevara's thesis of the war of guerrillas, of the continental revolution, the new man, etc. were to be seen by the FARC as important theoretical contributions to the revolution in Latin America. Within the ranks of the FARC he is depicted as the incarnation of the "perfect guerrilla fighter", a model to imitate, as he is the man who left all commodities in order to deliver himself to the revolution. Every 8 October, the day of his death, he is remembered and celebrated by all the fronts (Aguilera, 2003:4, 7-8). These heroes and their respective thoughts and theories make up the main explanatory frame within which the FARC justifies its actions.

The FARC also pays reverence to the *founding fathers*; namely those that are directly linked with the foundation of the group, with transcendental episodes or who have meant something for the development of the group. There is a mythification in these accounts of the organisation's origins and consequently, of its founding father (Aguilera, 2003: 4, 9). Marulanda's role in these narratives cannot be stressed enough, as he organised one of the first guerrilla groups in the south of Tolima that created zones of self defence in which land was distributed among all of the peasants, and was later to be the Commander in Chief of the FARC. The social struggle that took place during the Violence has facilitated the rhetoric of an ongoing social struggle that can justify the FARC's actions within its own

ranks. The participation of Manuel Marulanda Vélez in these events has made him belong to a legend in which his person and the FARC's history are part of the same whole.

The founding father of course belongs to the select group mentioned above which inherits exceptional qualities. Marulanda is seen as the master of the "war of guerrillas", alluding to Che Guevara. Jacobo Arenas also belonged to this group and even continues to do so after his death in 1990. In FARC writings, his name is also compared to that of Che Guevara, who as we have seen was the "perfect guerrilla fighter". He is moreover depicted as the one who started a more thorough structuring of the group, being a visionary and an intellectual (Aguilera, 2003: 11).

To this picture of exceptionality belongs the impossibility of making mistakes. When the founding father makes mistakes, these are silenced and excused (Aguilera, 2003: 12). Thus, as I have mentioned earlier, errors by "the exceptional" are transformed so that they will fit the general narrative and identity of the FARC. Marulanda's faults will hence be extremely difficult to identify. An interesting point here is that identifying his mistakes would make self-legitimation very difficult to all the members of the group, who actually risk their lives for the organisation. Who would believe in the 'just cause' if the leader of this cause was not just himself? Hence, in the self-legitimation of every single member of the FARC, the image of a good and just leader is crucial.

Marulanda's discourse thus becomes important both to his own and to all members' self-legitimation. Commander Fernando Caicedo mentions a particular letter from Marulanda to Andrés Pastrana at the time the latter was president as of "obligatory study" (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 43), and this is probably the case for most of his letters and speeches. In his speech on the day of the FARC's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1994, he typically recounted the story of Marquetalia, of the 16 000 soldiers at war against 48 men, and concluded that the responsible for the calamities that the people suffered "today" (i.e. in 1994) were the political leaders under the National Front<sup>76</sup>. Today's sufferings are hence seen as the result of those concrete happenings centred around Marquetalia during the bipartisan power-sharing system, happenings in which he himself played a central role; the present situation of war is seen by the FARC as an inevitable culmination of past events. The past thus legitimates the actions of today, and the FARC is presented as the solution; the one organisation capable of achieving the fundamental changes that the country requires in order to stop this suffering. The FARC also presents itself as a 'serious' organisation, according to Gutiérrez (2003:8). It is capable of enforcing its rules, a necessity for the organisation's effectiveness. Thus, summary executions and other strict disciplinary modes of punishment are legitimated by the leadership as indispensable.

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<sup>76</sup> 27 de mayo de 1994: 30 años de las FARC-EP: Texto completo del discurso pronunciado por el Comandante en Jefe de las FARC-EP", the FARC's web page.

In order to fit themselves into their social setting, to appeal to the civilian population and their common symbols<sup>77</sup> and identity, as we have seen, guerrilla groups have to draw claims from the values and governing legitimations of their own society, including those belonging to nationalism and patriotism. Moreover, the self-legitimizing discourse of a rebel group and that of those they seek to overthrow are often mirror images of one another (Barker, 2001: 89-91). Interestingly, according to Aguilera (2003: 4), in the case of the FARC we also find *patriotic heroes*, that is, heroes that originate in the early history of the country.

Such figures were not present to a particularly high degree in the early days of the FARC, but were later inspired to emerge by Jaime Bateman, the leader of another guerrilla group, the M-19. He came up with the idea to “nationalise the revolution”, pulling it down to the Colombian level, with *bambucos*, *vallenatos* and *cumbias*<sup>78</sup>, and singing the national anthem. He also appealed to the figure of Simón Bolívar, a classical patriotic hero, an appeal which inspired the FARC to adopt him as one of its most important heroes. Simón Bolívar was hence transformed into a guerrilla fighter alluding to his use of irregular warring methods and his struggles against “the oppressors” and “the exploiters”. Tribute thus started to be paid to the heroes of independence, and an understanding emerged of an inconclusive project of political emancipation initiated by Bolívar that shall be concluded by the FARC.

The reverence for national heroes can almost be said to be a mirror image of that of the Colombian Army, whose language is filled with moral and patriotic lessons taken from the same historical facts, only presented for different purposes. Both the FARC and the Army also wear uniforms with the Colombian flag on them (Aguilera, 2003: 15-18). Within the FARC, the notion of the home country (*patria*) is moreover very important. Its code of arms appeals to the national tricolour, on top of which there are two crossing rifles under an open book. According to the guerrilla fighter “Julio”, this means that Colombia has “taken up arms for national liberation”<sup>79</sup> (Aguilera, 2003: 18).

*Regional heroes and legends* are also important within the FARC’s narrative. This has been another way of approaching greater parts of the Colombian population. These heroes may not belong to official Colombian history, but may have deep regional importance. The resistance of the indigenous people is again important here, as well as the past struggles of the African slaves. Hence, the figure of José Gonzalo Sánchez, an important spokesman for indigenous people in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is celebrated by the FARC, along with for example José Prudencio Padilla, a mulatto who became a general in the wars of

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<sup>77</sup> I will treat ‘symbols’ as visual and verbal representations of the social order of the FARC and its values, goals and history, intended to create unity and coherence.

<sup>78</sup> These are typical Colombian dances.

<sup>79</sup> The exact citation in Spanish is “(Colombia está) ..alzada en armas por la liberación nacional”, and the interview with “Julio” took place in March 1999.

independence. Likewise, the names of numerous fronts in different departments are named after regional war heroes, such as Tulio Barón who played an important role in the war of a thousand days in Tolima (Aguilera, 2003: 21-2).

We also find the figures of the *revolutionary brothers*, which generally refer to the combatants who have died and that are remembered internally by the FARC (Aguilera, 2003: 4). ‘Brotherhood’ is especially important between the guerrilla fighters, for through it they can more easily face the fear of death and feel the value of their own sacrifice. The worship is concentrated around those who died during the foundational and mythical event of Marquetalia, and those who died during the experience of the Patriotic Union. The elimination of the members of the latter is another justifying element for staying at war or hardening the FARC’s position towards the State (Aguilera, 2003: 23-4).

This use of heroes and symbols, and also the additional name of “People’s Army” (*Ejército del Pueblo*) as was given to the FARC in 1982, have thus been employed in order to make the organisation more attractive and possible to identify with for Colombian peasants and working people all over Colombia. Importantly, the FARC has managed to position itself as the guerrilla group that most clearly originated in the bipartisan violence and the loss of belief in the state as a result of that violence (Aguilera, 2003: 15).

## **Narratives about the Enemy**

Equally important for rebels as narrating their own activities, is the demonising depiction of the enemy (Barker, 2001:91-4), in this case the paramilitaries and the state particularly. The state is described by FARC leaders as ‘bourgeois’ and its rulers as belonging to the ‘oligarchy’. The latter are dangerous to the community, whereas the FARC gives an image of being its protector.

If we compare the self-legitimations of the FARC and that of the Colombian Army these are indeed similar to one another. Also the images of the enemy are similar in both camps, especially when it comes to notions like democracy, violence and social injustice, as can be seen from the quotations below. Firstly, Manuel Marulanda at the 30th anniversary of the FARC<sup>80</sup> pronounced that

The bourgeois State has been governing for more than 150 years and, until now, it has not solved the problems, on the contrary, it has worsened them, we are in the middle of an irremediable crisis of the traditional parties, and within the institutions such extremes are found, that what the Ministers say does not seem constitutional to the Courts, or that of the Courts is not okay with the President. The military high commands do not obey the President, they violate the Human Rights; the embezzlements, the underhand dealings, the wastefulness, and so

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<sup>80</sup> “27 de mayo de 1994: 30 años de las FARC-EP: Texto completo del discurso pronunciado por el Comandante en Jefe de las FARC-EP”, the FARC’s web page.

many other things that are sufficient for us to become aware that it is not true what they tell us, that supposedly they are the saviours and the future of the people; it is history that tells us that they have been violent and repressive all their lives in order to maintain their policy and their privileges.

As I have claimed above, the FARC presents itself as the only solution for the Colombian people. It is therefore important here for Marulanda to stress that the State is *not* the solution; it is not a “saviour” and it is not the “future of the people”. Today Marulanda’s discourse against the state is not much changed, it has worsened. On 20 January 2006 Marulanda wrote the following<sup>81</sup>:

Now there comes another experiment of the State, supported by all of those who in different ways are annoyed at the peace policies of Pastrana because the objective of demobilising the FARC was not succeeded at, and a new chapter of total war is opened against the people who fight for better life conditions not from now on but always, according to the past history of Colombia. The government, the annoyed, and the war loving bureaucrats were convinced that it was the only way of getting rid of the guerrilla and solving not only the social and armed conflict but the whole national problem of political, economic, social, cultural and environmental character, with the help of the Parliament’s contribution as to its approbation of the anti-democratic reforms and laws that would permit Uribe to govern without difficulties for four years, with aspirations to govern for four more years spending all the State’s resources bribing and mounting in departments and municipalities his unconditional agents as well as paramilitaries, network of cooperating people, at the service of the electoral campaign, in order to give him continuity in the war that does not exist according to his own words in different national and international forums.

Marulanda is referring above to Uribe’s words “there is no conflict”. Uribe namely uttered the following at the celebration of the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Colombian Air Forces in November 2004<sup>82</sup>:

There is no conflict here, what there is are terrorists, there are no insurgents<sup>83</sup> against a dictatorship but terrorists against a democracy. I repeat, there are no insurgents against a dictatorship, there are terrorists against a democracy. For the sake of democracy we have to annihilate them.

And later, in the same speech:

These terrorist are the ones who cause the perturbations against the Colombian democracy. There have also been guerrillas and insurgency at other latitudes that have been against social injustice. Here, the violent ones have deepened social injustice, scared away private companies, abolished inversion, slowed down economic growth, condemned Colombians to unemployment, to informality, to working without social security, to misery, to exodus, they have produced two million internally displaced persons.

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<sup>81</sup> “Pastrana - Uribe y sus tres poderes”, letter written to Conservative politician Álvaro Leyva and published in the magazine *Semana*, 28 Feb. 2006.

<sup>82</sup> To be found at the Colombian government’s web page <http://www.presidencia.gov.co/sne/2004/noviembre/11/16112004.htm>, accessed 15 August 2006.

<sup>83</sup> Here he is probably referring not only to the FARC, but also to the ELN. However, the FARC is by far the biggest and is seen as Enemy Nr. 1.

It is worth noticing that Uribe is accusing the FARC of exactly the same as he is himself accused of by the latter: social injustice, violence, and a threat to democracy. As to the notion of terrorism, it is neither unknown within the FARC. The organisation at many occasions refer to the war as “Uribe’s terrorist war”<sup>84</sup>, and the Secretariat has moreover called Uribe a “fascist monster” (*monstruo fascista*)<sup>85</sup>. Another similarity in the discourse on both sides is the way the State and the FARC respectively are spoken about as “they” and “them”. These denominations automatically create a distance between the one who is talking and the one he or she is talking about, neutralising and demonising the other part as being only “violent”, “terrorist”, and so on.

### **Secrecy within the Legitimation of a Farian Identity**

As we have seen, rebels need to believe in themselves in order to cultivate loyalty, identity, and solidarity. As a rebel group cannot openly proclaim its beliefs in itself, it has to do it secretly with the help of symbolism, ritual nomenclature, signs, passwords, oaths, rebel songs, etc. (Barker, 2001: 98-9). I will here give a couple of examples of how this is done within the FARC.

Firstly, important FARC members tend to take on specific names of war, often names that are intended to evoke particular feelings, honouring for instance old war heroes. We have already seen this with Marulanda or *Tirofijo* (“Sureshot”), who in fact has two nick names considering that his real name is Pedro Antonio Marín (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 113).

Nick names have however gone through “a change of rules” along with the general development of the organisation. According to Orlando Villanueva, co-author of the book *Alias y apodos en la historia colombiana* which was released in 2005<sup>86</sup>, most nick names during The Violence were in fact related to animals. This is the case with Jorge Briceño Suárez, member of the Secretariat of the FARC, whose nick name “Mono Jojoy” was given to him when he was still a militiaman. His fellows compared him to a white, fat worm, known in the area of La Macarena as ‘Jojoy’. The word ‘mono’ refers to the complexion of his hair, which was lighter than that of the average Colombian. According to the same author, the situation changes between 1966 and 2005; now, most names of war contain both first and last names. He claims that this shows an intention of keeping their real identity secret, while at the same time implying respect, appraisal and self esteem within these organisations. He

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<sup>84</sup> See for instance “Qué se vaya Uribe, asesino!”, article by Alejandro Martínez at the FARC’s webpage.

<sup>85</sup> “40 años de lucha por la paz, la soberanía y la justicia social”, the FARC’s web page.

<sup>86</sup> “Los alias, algo más que una simple ‘chapa’”, in *El País*, Cali, 9 Dec., 2005, <http://www.elpais.com.co>.

further pledges that within the FARC, the use of nick names that denigrate the person is now prohibited.

This is very interesting information as to the kind of secretive self-legitimation that is used within the FARC- it has risen to a higher level when it comes to its own believing in itself and in the seriousness of its cause. The fact that it has created two clandestine movements under its direction, cutting its ties with the PCC, has probably also given it more independence and self esteem.

The media is of course crucial in order to spread FARC propaganda. This also has to be done clandestinely; through radio channels, films, the internet, and the magazine *Resistencia*. According to the Mexican newspaper *El Universal*<sup>87</sup>, the FARC's national representative of propaganda is Alfonso Cano, who as we have seen is one of the seven members of the Secretariat and very important for the FARC on the ideological ground. He gives directives about what should and should not be said. When the FARC was provided with the demilitarised zone in 1998, the organisation created a school of image and sound where the guerrillas could learn all the techniques necessary for film production. Films were made in order to strengthen the moral of the troops- to strengthen their self-legitimation- but also to spread the FARC's message to the outside world. According to the same source, a film called "The Guerrilla Girl" was made last year with the help of a Swedish film team and was then freely distributed in Europe. In Colombia it has been distributed clandestinely under the brand mark of FARC films. At the FARC's internet page, a few short films can also be found. In these, the national symbols accounted for earlier are very visible, such as Colombian music in the background, a huge Colombian flag with its code of arms in the middle of it, and a commander being filmed having a cup of plain Colombian coffee (in Colombia called *tinto*) while talking about the FARC's proposal for "policies of peace and friendship".

As we have seen, Manuel Marulanda has not had a high profile in the Colombian media because he purposely stays away from it; he claims that the media manipulates the information available concerning the internal conflict (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 112). This low profile may however have contributed to the secrecy and mysticism around himself as a person. Moreover, the account of the foundational event of Marquetalia has become commonplace among public opinion (Pécaut, 2004: 78), hence he is not in danger of being forgotten. He is an exceptional figure, which brings me to exceptionality and space. According to Barker (2001: 58), space when it is of difficult access (i.e. guarded by soldiers), can proclaim to those within it that they are exceptional. Barker is here referring to the palaces of kings and presidents, but also Marulanda is in a place of very difficult access,

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<sup>87</sup> "Producciones FARC presenta..." *El Universal*, 14 May 2006, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx>.

only in a different manner. His headquarter is situated in one of the most remote places of Colombia. When Álvaro Leyva visited him in December 2005<sup>88</sup>, it took him three days to get there, travelling by plane, car, boat and walking for many hours. The space in question is jungle-like and mountainous, guarded by FARC combatants, making it dangerous for a regular person to move around in the area. The surroundings are hence a self-legitimizing factor for the Commander in Chief of the FARC, and so is the mysticism and secrecy around his person.

### **Contradictions Between the Narratives and Reality**

According to Aguilera (2003: 15), the FARC has converted into the “original sin” of Colombia’s recent history. There is indeed a contradiction between its Marxist-leninist doctrinarian theory and its military tactics, which according to Fernán González et al. (2003: 58) manifest themselves as a “prolonged popular war” which ends up in a sort of “embarrassing Maosim”. This contradiction is especially visible when it comes to the FARC’s position towards international humanitarian law. When asked about that in an interview with the magazine *Alternativa* in 1998, a FARC commander answered that the organisation shared the principles of it, but that these were elaborated for a type of conflict between nations (González et al., 2003: 58). Moreover, the organisation claims that the concept of civil society managed by international humanitarian law divides the population in an artificial manner, as if armed participation in conflict were the only way of contributing to it. Hence, the FARC considers those who give information to the enemy, popularly called *sapos* (toads), or those who in some way finance the war, as non-civilians. Death penalty to *sapos* who have put FARC combatants’ lives in danger is even considered necessary (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 134). When it comes to the application of “revolutionary justice” to people who are innocent even in these matters, one commander’s excuse<sup>89</sup> is that there are people in the intermediate level of direction who do not make consultations before they act, and that the problem arises because “it is an organisation made up of human beings” (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 60-1).

Along with the death penalties, kidnapping is another typical violation of international humanitarian law<sup>90</sup>. Commander Fernando Caycedo, using the more neutral

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<sup>88</sup> “Tres días con Tirofijo”, *Semana* 28 Feb., 2006.

<sup>89</sup> Commander Fernando Caycedo, interviewed by Ferro and Uribe.

<sup>90</sup> Article 3 of the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 says the following: (...)

“Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria. To this end, the following



word of “retention” says that there is in fact a justification to it, namely that they must make those who have economic power pay taxes in the same way that the State does. The State when someone does not pay taxes, puts the person in jail without anyone calling it kidnapping or a violation of international humanitarian law (Ferro and Uribe, 2002: 95). However, kidnapping is an independent source of income to the FARC; it is not only related to the non-payment of such obligatory contributions (Rangel, 2001: 389). Indeed, Commander Caycedo’s argument does not account for the hundreds of people not covered by their law of taxation<sup>91</sup> that are kidnapped every year.

Another contradiction within the FARC is that between theory and practice (González et al., 2003: 58). Activities related to drug trafficking is one of the concrete practices that go against the principles of Marxist-Leninism, because these activities necessarily link the organisation to mafia activities and capitalist money makers.

The FARC does not want to admit its being involved in drug trafficking, and the Central General Staff accordingly expressed the following when its members came together in 2000: “Drug trafficking is a phenomenon of globalised capitalism and first and foremost of the *gringos*<sup>92</sup>. It is not the FARC’s problem. We reject drug trafficking”<sup>93</sup>. The FARC’s official spokesman Raúl Reyes was asked in an interview in 2004 for how long the FARC would continue to finance itself with money from drug trafficking, and answered the following: “That is not true. The FARC collects taxes from those who commercialise coca, from those who produce the basic paste in order to send it abroad. There is no other relationship between the FARC and drug trafficking”<sup>94</sup>. It may seem like this issue is a problem even to the self-legitimation of the FARC’s leadership itself, such that links to drug traffickers are considered more of an exception than a rule.

As we have seen, the FARC has a high degree of organisational effectiveness and has become more mature and intelligent in its self-legitimation. This legitimation is more successful within the FARC than outside it, because of difficult questions such as

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acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons:

(a) Violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; (b) Taking of hostages; (c) Outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment; (d) The passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.”

<sup>91</sup> The FARC’s Law 002 about taxation has three articles: “**1.** Collect taxes FOR PEACE from those individuals and legal entities, whose patrimony is superior to a million U.S. dollars. **2.** From now onwards [March 2000], those covered by this LAW should present themselves in order to attend this obligation. A second call will increase the tax amount. **3.** Those who do not attend this requirement will be detained. Their liberation will depend on the payment that will be determined.” To be found on the FARC’s webpage.

<sup>92</sup> A *gringo* is a person from the U.S.A.

<sup>93</sup> “Legalizar el consumo de droga. Única alternativa sería para eliminar el narcotráfico”, 24 March 2000, the FARC’s web page.

<sup>94</sup> “Entrevista de Yamid Amat a Raúl Reyes”, in *El Tiempo*, 27 July 2004.

international humanitarian law and the FARC's apparent relationships with drug cartels. These questions are however somehow justified in a way that seems to convince most of the combatants, who in order to legitimate their own and the group's actions need to find coherence between the memory-narratives, the self-legitimations of the leadership, and their own personal experiences.

According to Ahonen, (1999), "how far the actual collective historical identity conforms with the hegemonial narratives, depends on the critical historical skills of the common people". As we have seen, the educational level among combatants on average is quite low. According to Ferro and Uribe (2002: 85) this is a problem for the organisation, but I would claim that in a way, it can also be a strength if level of education includes critical historical skills. The combination of a well-educated leadership and low critical historical skills among the average member can make collective identity easier to shape.

The personal experiences of combatants and their sense of reality are also marked by what Thoumi (2005: 47) notes as post-traumatic stress, a general problem within the Colombian population which has not been treated adequately. He claims that this situation is a serious obstacle to solidarity, trust, and the capacity of negotiating peace. He also asks the rhetorical question of what effects it might possibly have that most of the leaders of the government, the guerrillas and the paramilitary groups have had parents and relatives who have been kidnapped or killed, or have been kidnapped, extorted or threatened themselves. It seems probable that the latter has effects on FARC combatants' sense of reality and justice, on their feelings of hate, anger, and fear.

The spectacular memory-narratives of the FARC most probably give combatants a sense of belonging to the continuation of great historical events. Along with feelings of brotherhood and those provoked by songs, symbols and secrecy, this gives them a feeling of being important, as opposed to a situation known to so many Colombians; that of being unemployed<sup>95</sup>. As I have shown, and agreeing with Gutiérrez (2004: 275-6), a crucial strength of the FARC is that it does indeed give its members tools to interpret their personal experience in an explanatory frame of collective destiny in which self defence is an

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<sup>95</sup> According to the Colombian government's department of statistics (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística- DANE), the unemployment rate for 2006-2005 is 11.5. The CIA's World Factbook similarly uses the number of 11.8 for 2005. However, DANE in its survey (*Encuesta Continua de Hogares- ECN*) includes the rate of *participation*, which for the same year was 59.8. In its methodology, to be included in this category a person must undertake at least one hour of paid activity per week during the week of reference. Included are also family members who, without payment, work at least one hour a week, as well as those persons who did not work during the week of reference but all the same had a job.

On the unemployment rate, see

[http://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/boletines/ech/ech/bol\\_espec\\_may06.pdf](http://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/boletines/ech/ech/bol_espec_may06.pdf), for the CIA's World Factbook; <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/co.html#Econ>, on the methodology of the unemployment survey, see [http://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/fichas/empleo/ficha\\_ech.pdf](http://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/fichas/empleo/ficha_ech.pdf).

important historical ingredient. Yet another important factor is the size of the organisation, a factor that serves the function of confirming the combatants' self-legitimation. It is all the more tempting to enter the most successful and biggest group (Gutiérrez, 2004: 271). The appeal of military life should also not be underrated, for the power and status of a gun can give social advantages. They command attention and respect, which are essential values of the FARC's 'serious-respectable' identity (Gutiérrez, 2003:13).

We have seen that life as a FARC combatant is hard and risky, and breeches of the FARC's rules are severely punished. The question of whether conviction or fear is the reason why so many combatants stay in the organisation is difficult, but it seems to be related to average time of service. Deserters are mostly relatively new members of the organisation; combatants apparently become more loyal when they have had years of learning behind them to cope with guerrilla life (Gutiérrez, 2003:16).

### **The FARC's Basis of Legitimacy**

Recalling Weber's understanding of a legitimate order, an order is seen as legitimate by its members when action is oriented towards determinable "maxims" regarded by the actor as obligatory or exemplary. When the order is seen to define a model, and it is perceived as binding, it enjoys 'legitimacy'.

We must therefore look for visible signs of courses of action chosen by the actors according to duty and obligation; a far-reaching trend of exemplary behaviour according to the 'maxims' of the organisation. Clapham's indicators, employed in chapter 3, are of instrumental use in the study of a guerrilla group's effectiveness. Since these conditions for an effective organisation are all in place in the case of the FARC, it is reasonable to conclude that there is a belief in legitimacy among the great majority of its members. This belief is moreover due to more and more sophisticated self-legitimation and the leadership's ability to exploit historical memory for what it is worth. Without this belief in legitimacy, the given domination would not have been able to form a sufficiently reliable basis (Weber, 1968: 213). As we have seen, the FARC throughout the last 40 years has been able to form a basis reliable enough for the group to grow in number while at the same time staying united and effective.

If we are to judge further when it comes to signs of duty and obligation, it is worth remembering that the combat moral is high, that desertion only happens in the margin, and that splits are extremely rare. According to Gutiérrez (2004: 271), the FARC "offers the least, and demands the most; however in terms of growth, it is the winner". A strict materialist

would probably rather join the paramilitaries, who impose no strong restrictions, pay salaries and allow for looting to take place.

Remembering Weber's three types of authority, namely the legal, the traditional and the charismatic, he accordingly describes the ideal types of administration: To legal authority corresponds the *bureaucracy*, to traditional authority corresponds an administrative *staff based on personal loyalty*, and to charismatic authority corresponds the charismatic administrative staff composed by *followers of the charismatic leader*. We have also seen that the types of economy corresponding to these types of administration differ between them: The bureaucracy is most often paid for through taxation, while the administrative staff based on personal loyalty is usually paid for by the ruler himself. The followers of the charismatic leader at first share everything according to need, financing themselves through voluntary gift. At a later stage, the followers will most probably try to introduce stable salaries.

The administrative staff of the FARC is the Central General Staff, which as we have seen consists of 25 members. The members of the EMC are appointed at the National Conference of the Guerrillas, and they again appoint the Secretariat; hence we can say that they are bound to obedience to the latter by an actual belief in their legitimacy. That leads us to the question of what grounds this legitimacy is based on, namely rational, traditional or charismatic grounds, as well as the question of which type of administrative staff we are addressing.

The fact that the Conference democratically appoints the EMC, who again appoint the Secretariat, on the other hand implies a belief in the authority's *legal* right to issue commands. The members of the Secretariat can furthermore be replaced, which enhances the credibility of such rational grounds. As we have seen, the FARC imposes strong bureaucratic and normative constraints over its members. The organisation overwhelmingly prioritises bureaucratic interests over individual ones (Gutiérrez, 2004: 268-9), and the officials are separated from "the means of production or administration". The EMC indeed more resembles a bureaucracy than it is based on personal loyalty. Remembering that the bureaucracy is usually paid for through taxation, we must also note that the FARC organisation is indeed partly financed by the latter. Within the FARC, all goods are moreover common goods, and nobody is allowed a personal fortune (Ferro and Uribe, 2002:105).

As to *traditional* authority, "the sanctity of old rules and powers" is not necessarily a good description of the FARC's status quo. The organisation has gone through many changes during the years, whereas Marxist thought is still the prevalent point of departure. However, the rules based upon this thought are not obeyed primarily because of some conservative force of tradition. The rules and norms have rather been transformed to fit Colombian reality, and are not always "saint", if we are to judge by the organisation's links

to capitalist drug traffickers. Moreover, the economy is not driven by an attempt to enlarge the ruler's personal fortune.

The legitimacy of the leadership of the FARC is apparently neither based on *charismatic* grounds. Neither Commander in Chief Manuel Marulanda Vélez nor the rest of the Secretariat have shown to build their authority on a charismatic style but have rather pursued a political course that depends on the collective. However, the validity of charisma according to Weber (1968: 242) does not so much depend on a ruler's particular style as on the subjects' recognition of his genuineness, be it as a warrior hero or as a prophet with superhuman qualities. Again, we have to remember the important foundational moment of the FARC- the attack on Marquetalia. Those who participated in the resistance are part of a narrative in which individual stories and the origins of the organisation have become mixed together (Ramírez Tobón, 1994: 18), creating a powerful myth. Manuel Marulanda was already a leader in Marquetalia, and is often equated with the history of the organisation. His leadership is much based on his position as a legend, which, as we have noted, makes it increasingly difficult to identify his mistakes and errors. He is an exceptional figure who is highly respected within the organisation. The fact that he was proclaimed "man of the year" by the magazine *Semana* in 1998 proves that he is also seen as exceptional, as a man of influence, within Colombian society. As we have seen, the FARC's democratic institution of the Conference moreover loses influence when it is not organised often enough. The decisions are then taken by the Secretariat, which is headed by Marulanda.

It can therefore be concluded that the type of administration within the FARC is more bureaucratic than it is charismatic or traditional, and that the grounds on which the legitimacy of the leadership is based are also more rational than charismatic or traditional. However, there are some charismatic elements connected to the Commander in Chief's person. The organisation at the same time seeks not to make this position too overriding, in that it stresses his possible replacement or death in the future as uncomplicated when it comes to the organisation's effectiveness.

I have thereby found that the type of domination of the FARC is legal authority with some charismatic elements. These elements are indeed important for the general belief in the organisation; for Marulanda is seen as unstoppable and immortal. The absence of a clear line between him and the organisation may lead to the organisation as being also identified as unstoppable by its members. The importance of these charismatic elements represented by Marulanda may indeed be greater than the organisation likes to admit. It looks like a contradiction that he is portrayed as inseparable from the FARC, while at the same time, his future death is considered within the organisation not to become a problem to the organisation's effectiveness. The memories of Marquetalia are extremely important to the FARC's self-legitimation, so what will happen when the principal carrier of these is gone? In

my view, his death will at least take away an active ingredient of the organisation's explanatory frame. When all the founding fathers are gone, although they will be remembered as heroes, it will perhaps become a greater paradox within the organisation that so much time has passed since the organisation was founded, without the arrival of a final victory or peace agreement.

Barker's theory of legitimation and its instrumental indicators of the cultivation of a rebel identity is different from Weber's concept of 'legitimacy' in that it depicts an activity rather than a quality. Looking into this activity, I have been able to show that legitimation serves the role of justifying the FARC's contradictory activities, that a collective identity is extremely important, and that particular symbolic aspects are crucial for this identification to take place. The most effective self-legitimizing arguments of the FARC hence reflect some of the most important organisational resources of the organisation. These arguments are produced in strategic settings, in which the leaders choose to omit facts and deny or explain away all that causes repulsion among civilians. Consequently, self-legitimizing arguments do not necessarily tell the truth about an organisation. The self-legitimation of leaders however performs the function of sustaining and justifying the right to their position, and contributes to the subjects' belief that their order is legitimate. This aspect of self-justification was not neglected by Weber himself, for he also claimed that every system of domination needs to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy (Weber, 1968: 213).

## CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have examined the research question of how the organisational resources of the FARC relate to and define the organisation's internal legitimacy. I have drawn on C. Clapham's indicators of organisational resources, on the concept of collective identity, as well as R. Barker's account of the self-legitimation of rebels in order to cover the FARC's non-economic organisational resources. Its economic resources have been studied through Bakonyi and Stuvøy's perspective of a social order of violence in which economic activities are a form of social interaction. I have therefore considered the FARC's ways of extracting, reproducing and distributing economic resources as important to the functioning of the social system of the FARC. M. Weber's theory has been used as a means to systematising the grounds of the FARC's internal legitimacy according to type of domination. The group's organisational resources and self-legitimation provide an understanding of whether a belief in legitimacy is present, and of the aspects that most importantly contribute to this belief.

I have assumed that organisational effectiveness presupposes a belief in legitimacy to exist, because according to Weber, the belief in legitimacy is necessary for the basis of a domination to be sufficiently stable and reliable. The FARC's organisational resources of educated members of the Secretariat, a clearly defined political project, common principles and goals, effective vertical structures, coherence, and a high level of discipline all contribute to organisational effectiveness, according to C. Clapham. They are therefore also indicators of the existence of a belief among the subjects of the FARC that their order is legitimate.

By way of looking into the FARC's self-legitimation, I have also found that a great contributor to this belief in legitimacy is the FARC's historical memory. It is a fundamental ingredient in its members' collective identity and therefore one of the FARC's most important organisational resources. The sense of collective destiny namely provides a powerful explanatory frame, because personal experiences and memory-narratives are merged together in a story line that includes myths of past suffering. Symbolic aspects are hence crucial in the upholding of the organisation's coherence and effectiveness. It seems however, that the combatants' sense of belonging and feelings of loyalty depend on the amount of time served in the organisation; that in order to acquire a 'Farian identity' years of learning are needed. As a result, deserters are mostly relatively new members of the FARC.

The leadership of Manuel Marulanda cannot be seen as separate from the organisation's memory-narratives, in which he is presented as the leader who along with his 47 companions escaped 16 000 soldiers. His symbolic importance for the FARC's effectiveness and internal legitimacy is crucial because he is the protagonist and great hero within the organisation's historical memory. However, the organisation *can* function without him, because he does not alone make the decisions. The Secretariat works through

consultations and team work, and the political course is decided when possible by the National Conference of the Guerrillas. This dispensability of the FARC's Commander in Chief is also an organisational resource.

Yet another organisational resource that I have discovered essential for effectiveness and the belief in legitimacy, is the rational use and control of economic resources. Coherence between the latter and the collective narrative of the organisation is also crucial. The FARC has succeeded at this, to the point that the way of delegating economic resources is related to the "revolutionary mysticism" of the organisation. Hence, the FARC has managed to keep the economic resources a strength. The members of the group are not motivated by material wealth, for they receive none. The centralisation of resources and their fair distribution to the fronts are great advantages for internal cohesion to take place. Hence, the handling of resources actually fits into the picture of social relationships that the organisation aims at internally. This rational and "ideologically correct" handling of resources has probably been influenced by the organisational resources of a political project, educated leaders, effective structures, and high level of discipline; the latter also contributing to the tight control over the finances. The high degree of organisational effectiveness and skilled self-legitimation of the leadership seems to convince most of the combatants that there is coherence between the FARC's narratives and courses of action, despite violations of international humanitarian law and apparent relations with drug cartels.

According to Weber's typology, the claims to legitimacy made by the FARC's leadership are founded mainly upon rational grounds; on a belief that the person in authority has a right to issue commands and that the performed rules are legal. This can be concluded from the FARC's internal structures- the Conference, the Central General Staff and the Secretariat are organisms to which the members are elected democratically. However, Manuel Marulanda Vélez has never failed to be elected to the Secretariat, and his exceptional character and merits give way also to a belief in the FARC's legitimacy upon grounds other than rational, namely charismatic. He is seen as a legend, a warrior hero, someone who "does not make mistakes" within the organisation. Hence, a variety of ascriptions to legitimacy determines the submission to the order, although rational grounds prevail. Regardless of whether ideology or military strategy is regarded as most important by its subjects, and regardless of the degradation of the conflict as such, a belief in legitimacy exists. We have seen that the organisation takes increasingly more effort on the economic and military part, and that increased economic resources have translated into more military strength.

In this thesis I have shown that the most effective self-legitimizing arguments of an organisation may reveal its most important organisational resources, in this case exemplified by the FARC's historical memory. Through the perspective of the FARC's economic activities as social interaction I have also shown that the way in which resources are handled



has symbolic importance and affects internal cohesion, and that there is hardly room for personal winning among FARC combatants. The symbiotic type of financing that exists in the FARC's strongholds, the organisation's relative support in these areas and its provision of security and welfare-services moreover indicate the FARC's high degree of institutionalisation of authority.

The insight on these matters is extremely important in the search for conflict transformation, for in order to transform something it is necessary to know what that something is. Therefore, this case study shows the importance of looking into each actor and their dynamics. I have shown how the organisational resources of the FARC reflect an order whose legitimacy is based on mostly rational, partly charismatic grounds. Those rational grounds may be a future platform for transformation into a different system within the Colombian state, combined with a process of reconciliation and justice.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix Nr. 1: Colombian political map: the division into *departamentos* (departments)

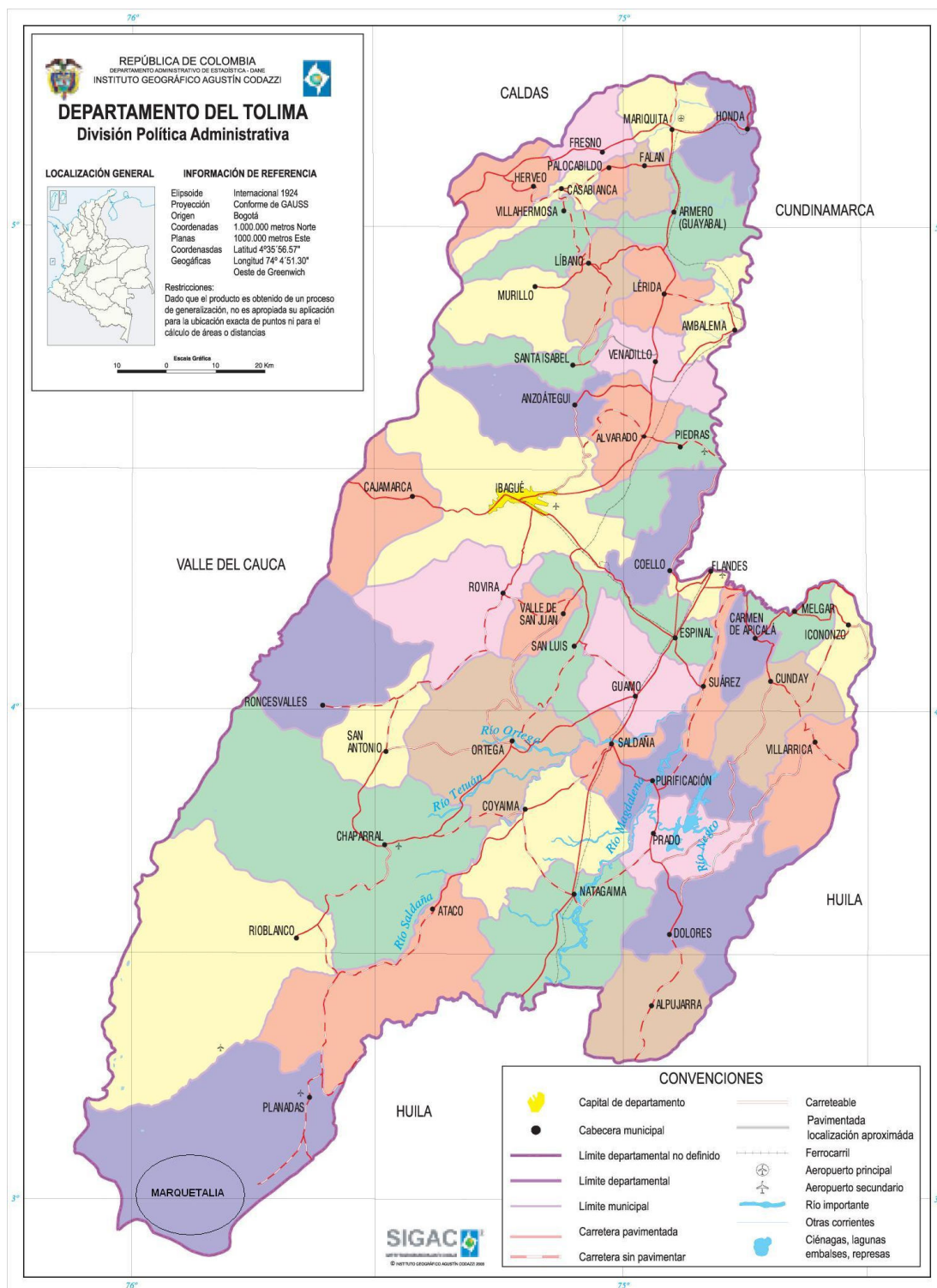


Appendix Nr. 2: Major FARC Attacks 2005



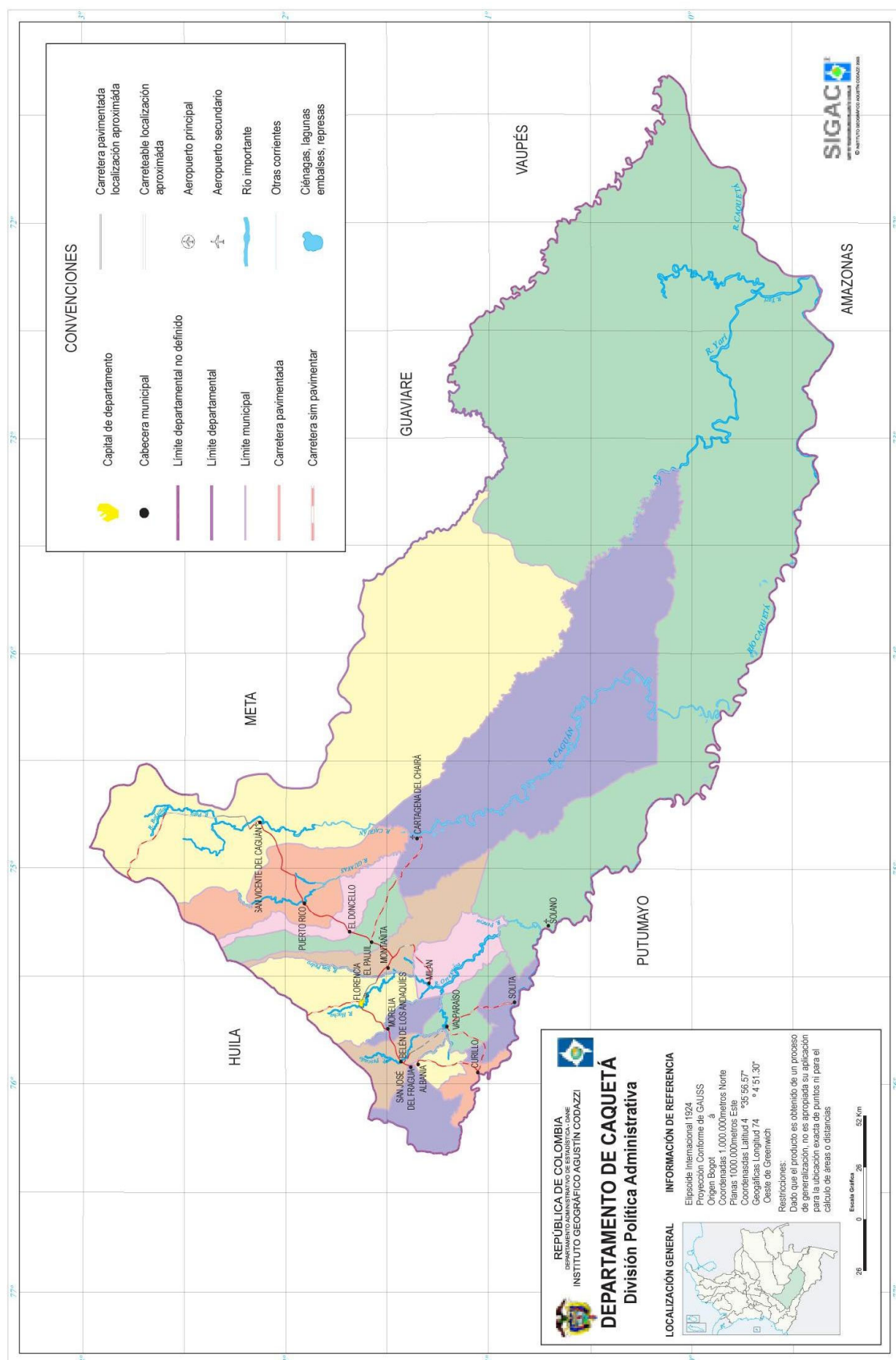
Adapted from an interactive map from Especiales online: “Ataques de las FARC.”  
<http://www.semana.com>.

### Appendix Nr. 3: The Department of Tolima



Source: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi. Marquetalia has been added to map.

## Appendix Nr. 4: Original Strongholds: The Department of Caquetá



Source: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi.